



PREPARING + MANAGING PHARMACIES DURING COVID-19

Action List for Workplace Safety and Continuity of Essential Services

This advisory document is designed to help pharmacies adapt their work environments and processes during covid-19 for the protection of staff and patients. Based on international best practices, this bulletin outlines key steps for pharmacies to prevent the spread of infection, maintain essential services, and address a potential surge of covid-19 patients.

For further information on safety practices, please refer to the guidance specific to pharmacies on the websites of: [Centers for Disease Control](#), [Federation of Asian Pharmaceutical Associations](#), [International Pharmaceutical Federation \(FIP\)](#), and [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#).

Pharmacy Environment Controls

- Install plexiglass or a clear plastic sheet at the customer contact area to provide barrier protection. Arrange a pass-through opening at the bottom of the barrier for people to speak to one another and to pass pharmacy items.
- Display signs and use floor markers to instruct customers to remain at least 6 feet (2 meters) away from the counter, from other customers and from pharmacy staff.
- Post signs on the outside of the pharmacy to request customers to wear a mask or face covering before entering the pharmacy area.
- Post phone numbers for customers to easily call or text the pharmacy staff.
- Ask patients with symptoms to call for consultation before entering the pharmacy area or queuing near other customers.
- Ensure the waiting area is cleaned regularly. Prevent the use of shared items.
- Encourage the use of hand sanitizer and make it available for staff and customers.
- Frequently clean high-touch objects and any surfaces that may be exposed to respiratory droplets such as door handles, buttons, tools, countertops, telephone.
- Ensure personal hygiene is possible for all staff by providing tissues, soap, trash cans, alcohol, disinfectants and disposable towels to clean the work area.
- Post handwashing leaflets in restrooms.
- Use chlorine-based solutions (diluted household bleach), alcohol solution (with at least 70% alcohol), or other appropriate disinfectant. Display this list of disinfectants: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>

Pharmacy Administration Safety Controls

- Educate all staff, volunteers and team members on the most current information about covid-19 risk factors and protective behaviors, including hygiene, cough etiquette and proper use of masks and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- Conduct an inventory of Personal Protective Equipment. Strategize with the team how to optimize the PPE supply. Purchase additional PPE as necessary.
- [Train all team members on how to properly use and remove PPE.](#)
- Provide daily updates about the covid-19 situation and ask about challenges from the perspectives of staff and volunteers. Work to solve issues together, while offering mental health support.
- Create a weekly “Fact vs. Fiction List” of treatments to prevent the spread of misinformation that could potentially be fatal. Review the list weekly with all staff.
- Encourage staff to stay abreast of current covid-19 information from verified sources such as the WHO multilingual [health alert service via WhatsApp](#).
- Stay up to date on public health emergency planning and response activities in the local community. Establish relationships with partners in the community.
- Provide staff and patients with a current list of contact numbers for referral facilities within and near the community. Train staff on how to manage and transfer patients.
- Create more work shifts to minimize the total number of employees in the pharmacy during working hours and to facilitate staff ability to maintain social distancing.
- Prepare alternative staffing plans to ensure as many pharmacy staff as possible are available to serve patients and customers.
- Promote telehealth strategies by offering phone consultations, providing home delivery services and suggesting a healthy family member should pick up medicine.
- Ensure continuity of pharmacy supply. Prepare a list of substitutes. Identify alternative suppliers especially for products that are often running out or in demand.
- Limit dispensing to ensure that more people will be able to purchase their life-saving medicines from your pharmacy until the supplies are replenished.
- Strictly enforce the rational use of medicine at all times.
- Minimize cash transactions and exchange of currency. Maximize touch-free options such as mobile payment apps. If mobile payments are not an option, encourage debit and credit cards.



Pharmacists and Pharmacy Staff

- While different guidance is being offered through various channels as to whether pharmacy staff should wear full PPE, *at a minimum, all healthcare persons entering the pharmacy should always wear a mask while they are in the pharmacy.*
- Gloves should be worn whenever a team member needs to touch a patient, prepare or compound products, or handle any potentially contaminated material. Afterward, wash hands with soap for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Check all team members for symptoms of acute respiratory illness (fever, cough, difficulty of breathing) before they enter the pharmacy. Advise those who are sick to stay home until they fully recover.
- Pharmacists and healthcare workers are more likely to be exposed to covid-19. Help prevent the spread of covid-19 after leaving the workplace. Review and share with all staff, this [checklist of recommendations to improve safety at home](#).

Patient Safety and Support

- Update the pharmacy's guidelines for patient safety during covid-19.
- Manage expectations by informing customers about any changes in pharmacy policies, procedures and supply availability. Display simple signs and instructions in the pharmacy, and post updates on the facility's website and social media pages.
- When counseling a patient, use visual aids such as the covid-19 [fact sheets available in 30+ languages](#) from the Harvard Health Literacy Project. Print fact sheets and make them available for customers to take home.
- Make masks, tissues and trash cans available for customers. Display posters about cough etiquette and hygiene.
- Provide hand sanitizer for customers and staff before and after all interactions. Discourage pharmacy staff from using items handled by customers.
- Advise patients not to touch their eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Enforce social distancing and limit the number of customers in the pharmacy at any given time.
- Provide reliable information, sources and trusted products to customers to prevent frauds and scams.



References

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