

Ministry of Health

COVID-19 Guidance: Community Pharmacies

Version 3 – March 15, 2020

This guidance provides basic information only. It is not intended to take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Pharmacists should use their professional judgement and follow this guidance where possible.

Please check the Ministry of Health (MOH) COVID-19 website regularly for updates to this document, the latest case definition, FAQs, and other pertinent information: http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/2019_guidance.aspx

Active and Passive Screening

1. The latest case definition for screening is available on the MOH [COVID-19 website](#).
2. All pharmacies should undertake active screening (over the phone, voice recording, on websites, and for any patients presenting to the pharmacy staff with illness symptoms) and passive screening ([signage](#) at points of entry to the pharmacy) using the latest case definition for COVID-19.
3. Community pharmacies have a shared responsibility for informing and educating the public on COVID-19, including promoting infection control and preventative measures.

Positive Screening: What to do

Positive screening over the phone

4. A patient who screens positive over the phone should be advised to call their [local public health unit](#) and/or telehealth (1-866-797-0000). Patients should not show up to the hospital unannounced.

Positive screening at the community pharmacy

5. A patient who either meets the case definition through active screening by the pharmacist or self identifies as meeting the case definition while at the community pharmacy must be separated from other visitors and staff so that they are at least 2 metres apart (use a separate room where available) and given a surgical/procedure mask while pharmacy staff call their local public health unit and a plan for travel and further COVID-19 assessment is made.
6. If a patient is very ill, the pharmacy staff should first call an ambulance and let the paramedic operator know that the patient may have COVID-19 prior to contacting local public health.

Ensuring continuity of care

7. A patient who screens positive or is in self isolation should be advised to get someone from outside of their household to pick up their medications or the pharmacy should arrange for the delivery of medications, if this service is available. The pharmacist should ensure appropriate patient care is maintained (e.g. follow-up with the patient over the phone and provide any necessary counselling).
8. The medication should be delivered to the patient by either of the means above without direct contact with the patient. Pharmacists should exercise professional judgement to determine the most appropriate process taking into account the particulars of the medication with respect to security and storage (e.g. if placed in mailbox, ensure documentation of the reason for not obtaining a signature, have the delivery person call the patient once the medication is at door/mailbox to confirm they have come outside to get it, provide follow-up counselling by phone).

Testing for COVID-19

9. All testing for COVID-19 will take place in hospitals or arranged in consultation with the local public health unit.

Reporting of Positive Screening

10. COVID-19 is a designated disease of public health significance (O. Reg. 135/18) and thus reportable under the [Health Protection and Promotion Act](#).
11. Pharmacy professionals should contact their local public health unit to report a person suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19.

Occupational Health & Safety

- 12.** Pharmacies should have written measures and procedures for worker safety, developed in consultation with the joint health and safety committee or health and safety representative including measures and procedures for infection prevention and control. Detailed general occupational health and safety guidelines for COVID-19 are available on the Ministry of Health [COVID-19 website](#).

- 13.** Patient-contact surfaces (i.e., areas within 2 metres of the patient who has screened positive) should be disinfected as soon as possible (refer to [PIDAC Routine Practices and Additional Precautions In All Health Care Settings](#) for more information about environmental cleaning).