

Advice for community pharmacies

Version 2

COVID-19 infection control

Employer pharmacists are legally obligated to minimise risks to employees in the course of business operations. During this unprecedented time of COVID-19 disease, employers and managers must ensure measures are in place to protect the health and safety of all employees and customers.

The essential criteria to managing risks associated with COVID-19 disease in a community pharmacy setting are:

1. process for patients who present with symptoms of COVID-19 disease.
2. [physical distancing](#) amongst employees and customers.
3. advising sick staff members to remain at home and be tested.
4. hygiene including [hand hygiene and promoting good cough etiquette](#).
5. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for all staff.

Patients who present with symptoms

If a patient presents to the pharmacy with [COVID-19 symptoms](#) and does not already have a mask, one should be provided as a precautionary measure. Escort the patient to an isolated area of the pharmacy and ensure the staff member dealing with the patient is provided with a mask.

A patient with symptoms must be told to go home, self-isolate and contact Northern Territory's dedicated COVID-19 testing hotline on 1800 008 002. If the patient is very unwell, pharmacy staff should assist in arranging transport to a hospital or call for an ambulance. After the consultation, clean areas touched by the patient and remove/dispose of staff PPE and perform hand hygiene.

Physical distancing

COVID-19 specific signage is available from both the [Pharmaceutical Society of Australia](#) and the [Pharmacy Guild of Australia](#).

Barriers including clear plastic screens and physical distancing indicators such as floor markers at 1.5m intervals should also be a consideration for all community pharmacies.

Staff PPE

Wearing a surgical mask should be a priority of all staff if community transmission is apparent. Staff members who are immunocompromised or have been directed to do so by their health specialist must wear a surgical mask for their own safety. The use of reusable cloth masks is not recommended in a community pharmacy setting.

Cleaning

Workplace surfaces touched by staff members and customers is one pathway for diseases to spread. All staff members must be vigilant in maintaining the cleaning of common surface areas. This can be achieved

For more information, visit coronavirus.nt.gov.au

by a two-step clean and disinfecting process or by the use of a proprietary product that encompasses both steps.

If a patient presents with COVID-19 symptoms, the area(s) must be immediately cleaned.

Guidelines for the prevention and control of infection in healthcare can be found on the [National Health and Medical Research Council website](#).

Using a detergent

- A detergent is a surfactant that facilitates the removal of dirt and organic matter.
- Most hard surfaces including counters can be adequately cleaned with warm water and a neutral detergent as per the manufacturer's instructions.
- Allowing the cleaned surfaces to dry is an important aspect of cleaning.
- Routine cleaning of floors with detergent and water is recommended.

Using a disinfectant

- A disinfectant rapidly kills or inactivates most infectious agents.
- Disinfectants are not to be used as general cleaning agents, unless combined with a detergent as a combination cleaning agent.
- Disinfection should always be undertaken following and in addition to detergent cleaning.
- To choose a disinfectant refer to [national infection prevention and control guidelines](#).

Waste management

At this stage there are no additional controls for disposing of potentially infected waste within a community pharmacy. Pharmacy managers must ensure there are adequate waste-bins within the pharmacy for the safe disposal of all waste from staff members and customers.

More information

- NT Government Medicines and Poisons Control webpage: <https://health.nt.gov.au/professionals/medicines-and-poisons-control2>
- Pharmaceutical Society of Australia: <https://www.psa.org.au/coronavirus/>
- Pharmacy Guild of Australia: <https://www.guild.org.au/guild-branches/nt>
- SecureNT COVID-19 information: <https://coronavirus.nt.gov.au/>