

COVID-19 Guidance for Community Pharmacies

This document has been updated from the April 29, 2020 version. The following changes have been made:

- 30day supply is no longer in effect
- Added symptom child purple fingers or toes
- Inform client to self-isolate if symptomatic
- Inserted the latest Screening Tool
- Added references

Note: This guidance provides basic information only. It is not intended to take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment.

For the management of cases and contacts, Regional Public Health will provide the direction for follow up and advise if there is a need for employer action.

What you need to know

- Community pharmacies can play an important role in supporting the response to suspected cases of COVID-19 and in preventing the spread of the virus.
- Pharmacists are directed to supply patients with 90-day supply unless a particular medication is in inadequate stock to do so.
- It is important to take the proper precautions in community pharmacies to protect both staff and clients

General Advice to Pharmacies

There are several things that pharmacies can do to prevent their staff, and patients from becoming sick with this virus:

Post signage on entrance to pharmacy area informing persons to self-identify if they have 2 or more of the following symptoms:

- Fever or signs of fever
- new cough or worsening chronic cough
- runny nose
- headache
- sore throat
- new onset of fatigue
- new onset of muscle pain
- diarrhea
- loss of taste or smell

OR

- a child is displaying purple fingers or toes even as the only symptom

Similar messaging should be communicated on telephone messages and websites.

Tissues, waste containers and alcohol-based hand sanitizer should be available to clients and staff in pharmacies.

Align with the directive on the continuous use of medical/procedure masks by health-care workers (HCWs). This directive is in response to the emerging evidence that asymptomatic, pre-symptomatic or minimally symptomatic individuals can transmit COVID-19 and is meant to prevent transmission of COVID-19 by HCWs to their clients and co-workers. All HCWs in nonclinical settings must wear a medical/procedure mask when physical distancing cannot be maintained (e.g. pharmacists providing counselling to clients who cannot maintain the two meters physical distancing).

Increasing the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces is significant in controlling the spread of viruses, and other microorganisms. All surfaces, especially those general surfaces that are frequently touched, should be cleaned frequently, at least twice daily and when soiled.

The following hard-surface disinfectant products meet Health Canada's requirements for emerging viral pathogens. These authorized disinfectants may be used against SARS-CoV-2, the coronavirus that causes COVID-19. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19/list.html>

Review infection prevention and control/occupational health and safety policies and procedures with staff. For example, staff should not come to work when they are sick.

Pharmacists and staff should monitor for symptoms:

- If a pharmacist develops COVID-19 symptoms (two or more of the following: new onset/exacerbation of chronic cough, fever or signs of fever, sore throat, runny nose, headache, new onset of fatigue, new onset of muscle pain, diarrhea, loss of taste or smell) while away from their work, they should immediately call the dedicated line 1- 833-475-0724 to arrange testing, stay off work and self-isolate.
- If a staff member develops COVID-19 symptoms while away from work, they should call 811, stay off work and self-isolate.
- If a pharmacist or staff member develops symptoms of COVID-19 while at work, they should:
 - avoid further patient contact
 - immediately remove themselves from work
 - do not remove their mask if wearing one or don one immediately
 - wash their hands
 - pharmacists should call the dedicated line to arrange testing and staff should call Tele-Care 811.

For additional information on infection prevention and control, please refer to the Public Health Agency of Canada website: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/infectious-diseases/nosocomial-occupational-infections/routine-practices-additional-precautions-preventing-transmission-infection-healthcare-settings.html>

Screening

- Pharmacies should undertake active screening (asking questions about symptoms and travel/exposures) and passive screening (signage) of patients for COVID-19.
- All patients should be screened over the phone before arriving at the pharmacy whenever possible, using the [Screening Tool](#) below.

SCREENING TOOL

1. Do you have any of following symptoms: fever/feverish, sore throat, headache, runny nose, a new cough or worsening chronic cough, new onset of fatigue or muscle ache, diarrhea, loss of taste or smell; in children, purple markings on the fingers or toes?

If you answered YES, and have ONLY ONE symptom, you may phone 811 to discuss COVID-19 testing, but you do not need to self-isolate. As a precaution, please self-monitor for onset of additional symptoms that may develop.

If you answered YES, and have 2 OR MORE of the symptoms, then self-isolate at home, and call 811.

2. If you answer YES to ANY of the following below, then you must stay home and self-isolate for 14 days.

If you develop symptoms, please refer to the self- assessment link on the Government of New Brunswick webpage.

- a. Have you had close contact within the last 14 days with a confirmed case of COVID-19?
- b. Have you been diagnosed with COVID-19 within the past 14 days?
- c. Have you returned from travel outside of Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and these locations in Québec: Témiscouata Regional County Municipality, Avignon Regional County Municipality and Listuguj First Nation community (day trips only to these Quebec communities/no overnight stay) within the last 14 days (IF for work purposes, you are not required to self-isolate upon return, but should self-monitor for symptoms)?
- d. You have been told by public health that you may have been exposed to COVID-19.

Follow Public Health advice if you are waiting for testing results for COVID-19 or have been told to self-isolate.

If you develop symptoms, please refer to the self-assessment link on the Government of New Brunswick webpage.

If a client is on the phone and answers yes to at least one of the questions above:

- The client reporting symptoms should be advised to call Tele-Care 811 for further guidance and to self isolate.
https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/ocmoh/cdc/content/respiratory_diseases/coronavirus/protect-yourself-and-others.html
- The client should get someone from outside of their household to pick up any necessary medications; or
- The pharmacy should arrange for the delivery of medications, if this service is available.
- The medication should be delivered to the client by either of the means above without direct contact with the client (e.g. placed in mailbox).

If a client presents in person and answers yes to at least one of the questions above:

- The client needs to be separated from other patients and staff so that they are at least two meters apart (use a separate room where available) and given a medical/procedure/cloth mask to wear.
- Pharmacy staff should avoid close contact with the client.
- Clients should be referred to the COVID-19 Community Assessment Centers by calling Tele-Care 811 where appropriate and then self-isolate at home.
https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/ocmoh/cdc/content/respiratory_disease/coronavirus/protect-yourself-and-others.html
- Pharmacists should consult with Public Health if further direction is required.
The following are hyperlinks to local Public Health Offices:
 - [Public Health Region 1 \(Moncton\)](#)
 - [Public Health Region 2 \(Saint John\)](#)
 - [Public Health Region 3 \(Fredericton\)](#)
 - [Public Health Region 4 \(Edmundston\)](#)
 - [Public Health Region 5 \(Campbellton\)](#)
 - [Public Health Region 6 \(Bathurst\)](#)
 - [Public Health Region 7 \(Miramichi\)](#)

- Client-contact surfaces (i.e., surfaces within two meters of the client who has self-identified) should be cleaned and disinfected as soon as possible. When choosing an environmental cleaning product, it is important to follow product instructions for dilution, contact time and safe use, and to ensure that the product is registered in Canada with a Drug Identification Number (DIN) and labelled as a broad-spectrum virucide.

If a client who presents answers no to the questions:

They **should not** be directed to call Telecare 811 but rather should be referred to the Government of New Brunswick website for more information. www.gnb.ca/coronavirus

Renewal, Extensions and Emergency Refills of Prescriptions

The best available information on the COVID-19 virus suggests that older people and those with pre-existing conditions should limit their potential exposure by remaining at home as much as possible. These patients may therefore seek early fills and/or deliveries of prescriptions to enable self-isolation. In addition, pharmacies may use their judgement and the options available to them to reduce non-essential physician visits, including those for prescriptions renewals.

Pharmacists should not hesitate to provide emergency fills, particularly in the case of expired prescriptions that would otherwise require a prescriber visit.

Worker Safety

- 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.
- Signage should be posted at the point of entry to the pharmacy and at reception areas for clients with symptoms and a relevant exposure history telling them to self-identify, perform hand hygiene, wear a mask, and have access to tissues and a waste receptacle.

For More Information on COVID-19

For more information, please consult the Department of Health's website on COVID-19 at https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/ocmoh/cdc/content/respiratory_diseases/coronavirus.html

NB Screening Tool

https://hsps.gnb.ca/sites/phs/cds/rd/NCOV2019/documents/FINAL/Screening%20Questions/Screening_July15_2020_upd.pdf

Worksafe NB: Embracing the New Normal as we Safely Return to Work

<https://www.worksafenb.ca/media/61016/embracing-the-new-normal.pdf>

For all other questions related to pharmacy practice, pharmacists should contact the New Brunswick College of Pharmacists.