

Pharmacy Recommendations during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic

Purpose:

- Protect pharmacy personnel and patients
- Limit exposure risk to patients and pharmacy personnel while in the pharmacy
- Continue providing safety delivery of medications and patient care services

The American Pharmacists Association (APhA) House of Delegates met virtually on March 20th and passed the following urgent new business items which are now APhA policy.

2020 Protecting Pharmacy Personnel During Public Health Crisis

1. APhA strongly urges all employers of pharmacists and pharmacy personnel, and the settings in which they practice, to implement protection and control measures and procedures, per consensus recommendations when available, and access to protective gear and cleaning supplies that ensure the safety of pharmacy personnel and that of their family members and the public.
2. APhA urges federal and state government officials, manufacturers, distributors, and health system administrators to recognize pharmacists and pharmacy personnel as “front-line providers” that should receive appropriate personal protective equipment and other resources to protect their personal safety and support their ability to continue to provide patient care.

2020 Pharmaceutical Safety and Access During Emergencies

1. APhA urges government authorities to hold pharmaceutical manufacturers, wholesalers, pharmacies, and other pharmaceutical supply distributors, and providers accountable to state and federal price gouging laws in selling those items to patients, pharmacies, hospitals and other healthcare providers during times of local, state, or national emergency.
2. APhA urges government authorities to aggressively enforce laws and regulations against adulterated products and false and misleading claims by entities offering to sell pharmaceutical and medical products to healthcare providers and consumers.

MPhA endorses and promotes each of these policies and further encourages all pharmacies to incorporate them into their practice.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a prime example of why pharmacists are vital frontline healthcare providers in delivering medication and patient care services. MPhA reminds pharmacies that we must be operate in a manner that is safe and limits exposure to patients & pharmacy staff.

General Recommendations

Patient Access to the Pharmacy

Pharmacies need to limit access to their practice location.

- Recommend installing plexiglass or clear plastic barriers at pharmacy department access points and checkout lanes.
- Drive-thru or delivery/curbside service must be required for all symptomatic patients.
- No symptomatic patient allowed access to the inside of a pharmacy, no exceptions.
- Pharmacies that have drive-thru capability should drive-thru service as their primary access point in addition utilizing delivery/curbside service.
- Pharmacy must adhere to social distancing in the pharmacy from the door to the pharmacy department counter
- Pharmacies should impose markers on the floor the delineate the CDC recommended, 6 foot spacing from the door to the pharmacy department or at least within 100 ft of the pharmacy department.
- Pharmacies need to limit indoor access to their patients and require patients call ahead prior to entering the pharmacy and to have the patients wait in their cars until their prescription order is ready for pick-up.
- Encourage patients to call in refill numbers and to NOT bring-in previous dispensed/used medication containers/packaging.
- Pharmacies should consider erecting established barriers or gates to facilitate limiting access to the pharmacy counter and enabling the pharmacy personnel to direct and control the pharmacy department and exposure risk.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is recommended and encouraged, in addition to the below hygiene and sanitization processes. NOTE: PPE supplies are extremely limited, and pharmacies need to be diligent to ensure access to PPE (even to a minimal standard) to protect personnel and patients.

Hand Hygiene

- Ask patients to wash hands or utilize hand sanitizer before using keypads at the register.
- Wash hands before and after direct patient contact.
- Wash hands after touching a patient's money, prescription hardcopy, or other personal property.
- Consider washing hands every 30 minutes if handling medications.
- If possible, wear gloves while handling patients' prescriptions, medications, or other personal property
- Wash hands after signing portable signature pads for store deliveries (FedEx, UPS, wholesaler, etc.)
- If passing materials to patients to return, offer them hand sanitizer before handing them the item.
- Employees should wash hands after taking out any trash.
- Sanitization
- Wipe down patient care areas every 30 minutes or after a sick patient is in the pharmacy.
- Wipe down countertops, pens, keyboards and phones immediately after patient use.
- Regularly sanitize the knobs on the doors to your pharmacy and pharmacy areas.
- Outside Vendors and Deliveries
- Sanitize any deliveries that come to the pharmacy, including the outside of plastic containers.
- Have outside workers (building maintenance, IT, pest control, etc.) wash hands and use sanitizer regularly while performing service calls.



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Delivery Drivers

Ask that delivery drivers not enter patients' homes, if possible. To minimize any contact, call the patient to let them know they have arrived, and leave medications where requested.

- Wipe down the interior of the delivery vehicle before and after each shift.

Personal Protective Equipment

- Have patients who are coughing and sneezing wear masks or remain outside of the pharmacy.
- Use gloves and masks when coming in direct contact with patients (delivery drivers, immunizations, direct patient care).

Avoid

- Avoid touching your face with your hands (mouth, nose, eyes, etc.).
- Avoid passing out any sample products.
- Avoid utilizing patients' cell phones to talk with family members or other health care providers.

Other

- Do not utilize clipboards made of porous surfaces for patient use.
- Ask that if employees wear a work jacket or uniform, that they wash it after each shift.
- Encourage patients to utilize drive-thru, delivery or mailing options if available, and if possible.

If you have a member of your pharmacy personnel that becomes COVID-19 positive or your practice site is exposed to a COVID-19 positive patient, please call the state and/or local hotlines to report the issue and they will guide you through the latest guidance for support, isolation, and/or testing.

Managers/Owners: Please implement these recommendations at your practice. Also, ensure you have a plan(s) to handle situations when staff become unavailable due to themselves or a member of their family becoming sick or infected and may not be available for an extended period.

These recommendations will continue to evolve as the COVID-19 pandemic progresses. This extraordinary situation is far from ideal. MPhA welcomes feedback on these recommendations and how to improve them to enable pharmacy personnel to practice safely and limit exposure risk. Please provide feedback to MPhA Executive Director, Lindsay De Santis at Ldesantis@masspharmacists.org and use the subject line COVID-19 Recommendations Feedback or call 781.933.1107.

Patient Care

Emergency Prescription Refills

This is a general reminder that as of orders issued by the Governor on March 25, 2020, A pharmacist is authorized to issue an emergency prescription refill up to a 30-day supply in the event a patient's prescriber is not available to authorize a new prescription for continuation of therapy for a chronic condition in accordance with the pharmacist's professional judgement.

Proper Medication Dispensing

You may have patients seeking medications that may or may not be a proper treatment option for COVID-19. Please use your professional and clinical judgement to ensure ethical dispensing of medications for the treatment of COVID-19 that is outside established CDC and/or FDA approved guidance.

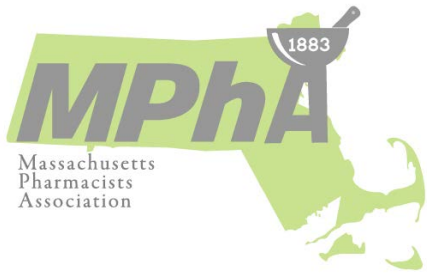
In addition, MPhA recommends limiting prescription fills to a 30-day supply to maximize the available supply and inventory of all prescription medications. There are already medications back orders, allocations, and short supplies occurring in the marketplace. We have a responsibility to ensure supply of medication to all patients and all communities. Please order and dispense medications and supplies responsibly.

For the most up-to-date information, please visit the CDC website, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

View additional resources specific to practice in Massachusetts:

[MPhA COVID-19 Resource Center](#) or click here <https://www.masspharmacists.org/covid-19-resources>
<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-guidance-and-directives#health-care-professionals-&-organizations->

Massachusetts Pharmacists Association
PO Box 374
Boxford MA 01921
781.933.1107
info@masspharmacists.org



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