

Personal protective equipment (PPE) used by community pharmacy for prevention of COVID-19

8 APRIL 2020

As an essential worker, you are playing a vital and important role to keep New Zealand running during Alert Level 4. To protect yourself, and those you live with, you should follow basic hygiene measures at home and at work. This is the best defence against COVID-19.

Basic hygiene measures are the most important way to stop the spread of infections, including COVID-19. Basic hygiene measures include:

- cough or sneeze into your elbow or by covering your mouth and nose with tissues
- put used tissues in the bin or a bag immediately
- hand hygiene; wash your hands with soap and water often (for at least 20 seconds)
- avoid close contact with people who are unwell
- don't touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean
- clean surfaces regularly.

In addition, any health interaction needs to start with an assessment of the health of patients before any close contact with the pharmacy staff member occurs. In the absence of any symptoms consistent with an acute respiratory infection, then precautions should be followed (maintaining physical distancing and hand hygiene). These standard precautions should be sufficient for most interactions.

Community pharmacies are considered workplaces with medium exposure risk to COVID-19. These are workplaces and environments that require frequent and/or close contact with (ie, within 2 metres of) people who may be infected with, but who are not confirmed, probable or suspected COVID-19 patients. Pharmacy staff are encouraged to follow a risk assessment approach before and during each patient interaction to evaluate the likelihood of exposure.

The provision of PPE (including face masks) is one strategy within a hierarchy of effective infection prevention and control measures that are fundamental to keeping pharmacy staff safe.

The pharmacy-specific advice that follows is based on the current New Zealand Ministry of Health guidance: PPE used by community care providers for prevention of COVID-19, available at www.health.govt.nz/ppe-health

| | | PPE required |
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| 1. | <p>Routine pharmacy activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pharmacy staff are reminded to use physical distancing (≥ 2 metre) and hand hygiene as well as implement higher level engineering and administrative protective measures in their pharmacy, which will help ensure that situations where pharmacy staff may be unavoidably in close contact with potentially infected patients are rare. | None |
| 2. | <p>Pharmacy staff actively screening/serving patients at the front door</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Triage at the door and ask patients not to enter if symptomatic. Maintain 2 metre distancing. Support patients doing hand hygiene. | None |
| 3. | <p>Providing community pharmacy anti-coagulation management services (CPAMS) to a well patient</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The POC test should be undertaken in the shortest time possible, with a 2 metre distance maintained at other times. When taking the blood sample, position the patients head away from you at up to 180 degrees (ie, ask the patient to look the other way). Gloves should be worn as per usual best practice. | None |
| 4. | <p>Providing community pharmacy anti-coagulation management services (CPAMS) to a patient in self-isolation due to recent travel or is a close contact (with no respiratory symptoms), of a confirmed, probable or suspected COVID-19 case</p> <p>Close contacts of people with confirmed, probable or suspected COVID-19 cases should not be coming into the pharmacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The POC test should be undertaken in the shortest time possible, with a 2 metre distance maintained at other times. When taking the blood sample, position the patients head away from you at up to 180 degrees (ie, ask the patient to look the other way). | Surgical mask and gloves |
| 5. | <p>Providing community pharmacy anti-coagulation management services (CPAMS) to a patient in self-isolation with confirmed, probable or suspected COVID-19</p> <p>Confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases should not be coming into the pharmacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The POC test should be undertaken in the shortest time possible, with 2 metre distance maintained at other times. When taking the blood sample, position the patients head away from you at up to 180 degrees (ie, ask the patient to look the other way). | Full PPE: mask, eye protection, gloves, fluid resistant gown or plastic apron [‡] |
| 6. | <p>Providing opioid substitution treatment services (OST) observed consumption to a well patient</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain a 2 metre distance throughout the transaction and perform hand hygiene. Provide the dose of methadone (OST) and a measure of water in disposable cups, place them on a suitable surface, ask the patient to take their methadone (OST) dose, then a drink of water. Dispose of the used cups in a rubbish bin with a lid. | None |
| 7. | <p>Providing opioid substitution treatment services (OST) observed consumption to a patient in self-isolation due to recent travel or is a close contact (with no respiratory symptoms), of a confirmed, probable or suspected COVID-19 case</p> <p>Close contacts of people with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases should not be coming into the pharmacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain a 2 metre distance throughout the transaction and perform hand hygiene. Provide the dose of methadone (OST) and a measure of water is a | Surgical mask and gloves |

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| | disposable cup, place them on a suitable surface, ask the patient to take their methadone (OST) dose, then a drink of water. Dispose of the used cups in a rubbish bin with a lid. | |
| 8. | <p>Providing opioid substitution treatment services (OST) observed consumption to a patient in self-isolation with confirmed, probable or suspected COVID-19</p> <p>Confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases should not be coming into the pharmacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain a 2 metre distance throughout the transaction and perform hand hygiene. Provide the dose of methadone (OST) and a measure of water in a disposable cup, place them on a suitable surface, ask the patient to take their methadone (OST) dose, then a drink of water. Dispose of the used cups in a rubbish bin with a lid. | Full PPE: mask, eye protection, gloves, fluid resistant gown or plastic apron [¥] |
| 9. | <p>Vaccinations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unwell patients (eg, respiratory symptoms, acute systemic illness with fever over 38°C) should not be vaccinated. The vaccination should be deferred until the patient is well. For well patients, a mask is not necessary. Minimise the time that you are in close proximity to the patient, for example by obtaining consent and providing information from a distance (≥ 2 metres) or virtually prior to administration. Gloves may be worn if this is your usual practice. | None |
| 10. | <p>Point-of-care tests in a well patient</p> <p>For example, measurement of blood pressure, cholesterol, glycaemia, pregnancy tests.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> These services may need to be restricted or interrupted if they could represent a risk to the health of the team (eg, respiratory symptoms, acute systemic illness with fever over 38°C). | None |

¥ For guidance on how to put on and remove PPE safely see PPE: how to put it on and remove it safely at www.health.govt.nz/ppe-health and a video at www.health.govt.nz/ppe-workers

There may be circumstances in your practice where you need to do things over and above this evidence-based practice.