**COMMUNITY PHARMACY**

Frequently Asked Questions – COVID-19

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| ***Please be aware this information is correct at the time of issue. We will strive to keep this up to date; however, given the rapidly evolving situation it would be important to remain alert to emerging as well as changing information. The document is to support professional decision making and should not be substituted for your own professional judgement.*** |

**Can I be tested for COVID-19? – UPDATED 24/08/2020**

Testing is available to all eligible staff groups who are employed within the Greater Glasgow and Clyde area.

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde are providing COVID-19 testing for staff within:

* Health and Social Care Partnerships
* Home Care and Care Home services
* Hospice Services
* General Practice
* Dentists
* Community Pharmacy services
* Care Homes

The symptoms of COVID-19 are new:

* continuous cough
* fever/high temperature (37.8C or greater)
* loss of, or change in, sense of smell or taste (anosmia)

If you develop any of these symptoms, contact the NHS to arrange to be tested. Do this online at [NHS Inform](https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/test-trace-and-isolate/coronavirus-covid-19-testing), or call 0800 028 2816.  You should self-isolate at home straight away along with other members of your household.

You will be asked to self-isolate at home for **10 days** if you have symptoms of COVID-19 or you have tested positive for it. If you live with someone who has symptoms or has tested positive, or if you have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive, you will be asked to self-isolate at home for 14 days.

You will be able to return to work if you test negative for COVID-19 and have had no fever for 48 hours.

While waiting for appointments and test results, staff and household contacts should follow guidance on self-isolation available from [NHS inform](https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/test-trace-and-isolate/coronavirus-covid-19-testing).

If you've been absent from work because you have symptoms (but feel sufficiently well and would normally continue to work) or a household member has symptoms, you should apply to be tested in the first 3 days from the onset of symptoms.

For further background information on COVID-19, including what to do when you received your results, please visit [NHS Inform](https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/test-trace-and-isolate/coronavirus-covid-19-testing).

Test and Protect, Scotland’s approach to implementing the 'test, trace, isolate, support strategy', is a public health measure designed to break chains of transmission of COVID-19 in the community.

**NHS National Pharmacy First Scotland Service 24/08/2020**

The NHS Pharmacy First Service (NHS PHS) was established in July 2020 as part of the Scottish Government's commitment to increase access to community pharmacy services by developing and implementing a redesigned minor ailment and common conditions service available to all. The focus is on increasing access to community pharmacy as the first port of call for managing self-limiting illnesses and supporting self-management of stable long term conditions in and out of hours and to improve pharmaceutical care and contribute to the multi-disciplinary team.



\*A visitor is someone who is away from their normal place of residence and who intends to stay in Scotland for less than 3 months. A person who is registered with a GP Practice in Scotland on a temporary basis and who is a visitor to Scotland under the 2020 Directions is not eligible to receive the service. A person in Scotland who is an asylum seeker, a dependent of an asylum seeker, a gypsy or traveller is not a visitor to Scotland.

An approved list of products has been developed by representatives of all 14 NHS Health Boards with input from Community Pharmacy Scotland and other key stakeholders. It details the limited list of items which may be supplied to eligible patients following a consultation in response to presenting symptoms.

**Wherever possible, providing lifestyle advice and support to manage minor conditions should be the preferred course of action**, with treatment supplied and referrals made only where necessary. With the exception of sections 10.1 (Skin: Eczema and allergy) and 6.1 (Cystitis), the items detailed in the Approved List can be supplied across all NHS Boards. In sections 10.1 and 6.1, each NHS Board has indicated the approved items which may be supplied by community pharmacy teams in their area.

This service will replace the existing capitation model seen in MAS and will move to an activity based model, where the pharmacy team will be remunerated for the activity undertaken and reimbursed for dispensed items. The activity will be based on **Advice: Referral: Supply**.

Three PGDs have been developed nationally for NHS Pharmacy First Scotland to replace existing PGDs for Fusidic acid (for treatment of impetigo), Trimethoprim and Nitrofurantoin (for the treatment of uncomplicated UTIs).

<https://www.communitypharmacyscotland.org.uk/nhs-pharmacy-first-info-hub/>

**Can I reduce my pharmacy’s opening times? – UPDATED 13/07/2020**

As the country starts to move out of lock down and businesses and NHS services begin to return to some form of normality I have taken the opportunity to review the reduction in core model hours that we had in place to allow Community Pharmacies to manage their work load through the COVID pandemic.

In May I completed the same exercise and on presenting to the Pharmacy Practice Committee (PPC), was advised that they did not feel it was the correct time to be returning to core hours and that the decision should be delayed in light of the Scottish Governments instructions at that time.

With these instructions changing, I reviewed the situation and once again presented to the PPC and they are now supportive of a return to our original core model hours. I am aware that a number of pharmacies throughout the pandemic did not alter their hours of opening, some have since returned to their normal hours and some pharmacies are still currently running on reduced hours. This situation is making it difficult for other services and patients to know when and where to access Pharmacy services at specific times.

Therefore I would like to ask that each Pharmacy return to our original core model hours with effect from ***Monday 3rd August 2020*** - those being:

* ***09.00 to 17.30 - Monday to Saturday***
* ***Lunchtime closing - 1 hour in the middle of the day***

This information will be supplied to all services from this date and we would ask that if a pharmacy is unable to comply with this requirement then in the normal manner they advise the CPD team of this and the reasons behind the non compliance.  You should use the form provided at:

<https://www.communitypharmacy.scot.nhs.uk/nhs-boards/nhs-greater-glasgow-clyde/general-forms/>

I would like to thank everyone for their sterling work through this time.

-Alan Harrison

**A pharmacy is offering an antibody rapid test service. Is this allowed? – UPDATED 13/07/2020**

Antibody tests are used to detect antibodies to the COVID-19 virus to see if you have previously had the virus. Some pharmacies are offering a test within the pharmacy. Public Health England [currently advises against the use of rapid point of care tests](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-rapid-tests-for-use-in-community-pharmacies-or-at-home/covid-19-rapid-tests-for-use-in-community-pharmacies-or-at-home) – where results can usually be obtained within 10 minutes – due to insufficient information about their accuracy and suitability for diagnosing COVID-19.

We do not expect pharmacies to be providing tests which do not adhere to guidance from the public health agencies in Great Britain. Where we have been made aware that a pharmacy is offering these tests we have told them to stop doing so.

Please let us know about any pharmacies providing tests that do not adhere to guidance from the MHRA or public health agencies by [raising a concern](https://www.pharmacyregulation.org/content/our-role). We will then consider what action to take. Please also report this to the MHRA.

We will keep our position under review in light of any changes to the situation, including any changes in guidance from the MHRA or public health agencies.

We do not have the jurisdiction over and would not advise on the legality, safety or efficacy of particular types of tests or kit.

**What kind of COVID-19 tests are available to members of the public and safe to use? – UPDATED 13/07/2020**

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has produced [a guide to COVID-19 tests and testing kits and their uses](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-tests-and-testing-kits-for-coronavirus-covid-19-work). There are tests for current infection, that is, if you currently have the COVID-19 virus, and there are antibody tests, that is tests for if you have already had the infection.

Tests for antibodies continue to be developed and validated, please refer to the MHRA and PHE for further guidance. The MHRA strongly advises members of the public or organisations who have purchased antibody tests and received antibody test results to continue to follow government advice whatever the result of the test.

We do not have the jurisdiction over and would not advise on the legality, safety or efficacy of particular types of tests or kit.

**If a pharmacy is selling COVID-19 testing kits that have not been approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency and/or do not have the CE mark, what action will we take? – UPDATED 13/07/2020**

Pharmacies must not sell products and devices that are illegal for them to sell, or provide misleading information about those products or devices.

Regulatory and public bodies play different leading roles regarding tests, testing and health, in accordance with their remit:

* Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) oversees the regulation of test kits as medical devices
* Trading Standards oversees the legality of retail sales (medical or non- medical)
* The Care Quality Commission, Healthcare Improvement Scotland and Healthcare Inspectorate Wales regulate medical services in England, Scotland and Wales respectively
* Public health agencies for England, Scotland and Wales provide authoritative public health guidance in their respective countries

The GPhC expects pharmacies in Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales) to adhere to guidelines and recommendations issued by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and public health agencies in England, Scotland and Wales.

Please let us know about any pharmacies that may be supplying products that do not appear to adhere to guidance published by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and Public Health England by raising a concern. We will then consider what action to take. Please also report this to the MHRA.

**NHS Scotland Near Me - UPDATED 06/07/2020**

Near Me is NHS Scotland’s video consulting service. It can be used to reduce exposure to coronavirus by enabling both patients and clinicians to consult remotely. It also improves access to care for patients who find it difficult to attend health care premises. Near Me is powered by Attend Anywhere technology. It has been procured by the Scottish Government for use across health and social care in Scotland.

Near Me is already used in primary care, secondary care and some community teams: this includes some pharmacists working in GP practices and hospitals. Information about Near Me can be found at [**www.nearme.scot**](https://www.nearme.scot/).

**How do I re-order Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)?** **– UPDATED 29/06/2020**

A telephone re-ordering system specifically for pharmacies to order facemasks became effective from Monday 20th April 2020. This can be accessed on the following number: **0300 303 5550. This line will be supported Monday – Friday between 08:00 – 20:00.** You will be required to have your contractor code and post code to hand when ordering.

Orders will be limited to 2 boxes of 50 masks each time to help manage supply. **We would ask that you do not place an order until it is necessary and be mindful of the expected delivery time of 2 working days.** Orders will be delivered by courier.

**Please NOTE: We are aware of users hearing an engaged tone when calling to re-order their PPE, please be aware that this is in fact a hold tone and NOT an engaged tone. Remain patient and please wait for your call to be answered.**

**What Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) should I be using?** **– UPDATED 29/06/2020**

PPE – Gloves and aprons have been delivered out to every community pharmacy in Scotland. These are for the purposes of deep cleaning. Masks have also been provided and are for use when working practices and face to face consultations are required and where 2m social distancing cannot be maintained.

Instructions for deep cleaning can be found here:

<https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/web-resources-container/covid-19-guidance-for-primary-care/>

Were community pharmacy staff are working in an area with possible or confirmed case(s) of COVID-19 and are unable to maintain 2m social distance, then Health Protection Scotland recommends that these staff members should use fluid-resistant (Type IIR) surgical masks for single session use; where a single session refers to a period of time where a health care worker is undertaking duties in a specific care setting/exposure environment. A session ends when the health care worker leaves the care setting/exposure environment. PPE should be disposed of after each session or earlier if damaged, soiled or uncomfortable.

At the end of a session involving use of PPE, masks should be removed as per[**guidance**](https://hpspubsrepo.blob.core.windows.net/hps-website/nss/2930/documents/1_covid-19-guidance-for-primary-care.pdf). This should be placed in a disposable plastic bag, then placed in a secondary disposal bag, tied and held for 72 hours before being placed in the pharmacies domestic waste bin. If the pharmacy has an appropriate waste contract with the capacity to take PPE, masks once removed can be placed into waste immediately.

**Do I have to supervise my patients receiving Opiate Substitution Therapy (OST)? – UPDATED 29/06/2020**

Supervision frequency has been reduced for many patients however some patients continue to require daily supervision. A short guidance document prepared by NHGGG&C Alcohol and Drug Recovery Service (ADRS) on the instalment and supervision of OST in community pharmacies can be found at:

<https://www.communitypharmacy.scot.nhs.uk/nhs-boards/nhs-greater-glasgow-clyde/>

**Should I be breathalysing patients who receive Disulfarim?**

No. **Disulfiram supervision (no breathalysing) should not be automatically reintroduced without contacting ADRS first**. If prescribers request on-going supervision of disulfiram, this **does not** include use of the breathalyser until further notice.

Always contact the prescriber or community treatment service if supervision has been temporarily suspended (OST and disulfiram prescriptions).

A short guidance document prepared by NHGGG&C Alcohol and Drug Recovery Service (ADRS) on the instalment and supervision of Disulfiram in community pharmacies can be found at:

<https://www.communitypharmacy.scot.nhs.uk/nhs-boards/nhs-greater-glasgow-clyde/>

**Have the GP surgeries closed?**

No. GP surgeries remain open but most are operating via telephone triage and only seeing emergency patients. If you are struggling to contact a practice due to increased volume of calls, it may be appropriate to discuss alternative methods of communication with them such as emailing your clinical mailbox.

**Are GP surgeries issuing prescriptions early?**

Most GP surgeries are encouraging patients to only order what they need, when they need it. However, it is appreciated that it may take patients longer to receive their prescription due to pharmacy workload and relying on deliveries or family members collecting medicines for those self-isolating. Most surgeries have therefore relaxed their ordering slightly to allow patients to order up to 2 weeks earlier than we would expect them to need it.

**Can I reduce what Community Pharmacy Services I make available to patients?**

NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde acknowledge that during the COVID-19 pandemic, community pharmacies will be experiencing increased workload and as a result may have to reduce/stop core services.

Harry McQuillan from CPS has acknowledged this and advised community pharmacies that they should focus on dispensing and the Minor Ailment Service – which should include delivery of Unscheduled Care, EHC, Paracetamol, UTI and Impetigo PGD’s when necessary.

Advice on reducing or altering some services has been made available in the CPDT COVI-19 Key Messages of the Day:

<https://www.communitypharmacy.scot.nhs.uk/nhs-boards/nhs-greater-glasgow-clyde/>

Please find attached a letter and Circular PCA(P)(2020)9 for **Smoking Cessation** service delivery during COVID-19:

<https://www.communitypharmacyscotland.org.uk/news-insight/sg-circulars/pca-p-2020/pca-p-2020-09-smoking-cessation-service-delivery-during-covid-19/>

**What is happening to patients who want to return unwanted medicines during the COVID-19 situation?**

‘NHS inform’ have issued advice that patients should only return medicines to your community pharmacy if it is essential- until the Government has removed the instruction for everyone to stay at home. When this has been lifted, patients can return unused medications to their community pharmacy for disposal.

Patients can only return medicines if they: don’t have symptoms; have been identified as a close contact of someone who has tested or; aren’t self-isolating for 14 days. When returning medication, patients are advised to:

* Wipe the outside of the bottle or packaging with a damp cloth using usual detergent
* Place in a plastic bag
* Separate any medicines with needles or controlled drugs from other medicines
* Wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water or alcohol hand sanitiser after handling

In the event of the stay at home restriction being lifted, normal patient return of unwanted medication processes should be reinstated. The GPhC has previously highlighted good practice in handling returned unwanted medicine where a pharmacy:

* Used a large tray, gloves and forceps to avoid handling the medicines
* Immediately recorded patient returned CDs in a separate book kept for the purpose and placed them in a clearly labelled bag in a segregated section of the CD cabinet for subsequent disposal
* Separated hazardous medicines (e.g. cytotoxic and cytostatic preparations) into a separate hazardous waste bin for disposing of them safely
* The rest of the returned medicines were placed in a separate area of the pharmacy, away from other stock, before having any patient details removed and being placed in the approved containers for disposal
* The pharmacy also took steps to ensure that people only requested what they needed

**Are GP practices allowed to phone or email prescriptions even though they may take longer than 72 hours to provide the prescriptions?**

In the current situation, if there are concerns that the follow up prescription may not be received within the specified timeframe of 72 hours, the Pharmacist should seek confirmation (written if possible but this may be difficult to do) that the prescriber will supply the prescription as soon as is reasonable practicable. The Pharmacist should make a record of any such supply as usual, and retain the communication with the prescriber and follow up after the supply to ensure the prescription is received. They key bit is to try and get the prescription as soon as reasonably possible.

**Are primary care pharmacy teams supporting community pharmacy?**

Pharmacy Services have developed a process for community pharmacies requiring support. This ensures that any NHSGG&C staff resource available to help can be used to the best effect.

Prior to contacting Pharmacy Services please ensure you have actioned any contingency plans, discussed with your Area Manager/Owner/Superintendent Pharmacist where applicable and discussed available support with your ‘buddy’ pharmacy? If you still required support, Pharmacy Services can be contacted using details below:

* 0141 201 6047 (first point of contact)
* 07772 586 994 (if main number busy)
* Gg-uhb.cpdevteam@nhs.net (if no reply from either number)

Issues should be reported by phone between 8.00am – 9.00am Monday to Friday where same day response is required. These contact phone numbers and email address will be staffed Monday to Friday from 8.00am – 2.00pm. The full process can be accessed at:

<https://www.communitypharmacy.scot.nhs.uk/media/2424/covid19-poster-for-pharmacies-requiring-support.pdf>

**How do I deliver consultations for EHC and Pharmacy First while maintaining social distancing?**

It is acknowledged that during the COVID-19 pandemic there may be circumstances where an EHC or Pharmacy First consultation cannot take place face to face.

The Pharmacist should assess any such requests and may wish to consider carrying out consultations via the phone. The Pharmacist should make full use of any PGDs and their own professional judgement.

**What can I do if I encounter medicines supply issues?**

We are aware that an increase in demand has caused a shortage of some medications. You should continue to follow Community Pharmacy Scotland [Shortages Guidance](http://www.staffnet.ggc.scot.nhs.uk/Clinical%20Info/Documents/CP%20Medicines%20Shortages%20Guidance.pdf).

Where available, NHSGG&C advice on specific shortages will be posted on the [Staffnet Current Medicines Supply Problems and Shortages Page](http://www.staffnet.ggc.scot.nhs.uk/Acute/Division%20Wide%20Services/Pharmacy%20and%20Prescribing%20Support%20Unit/Medicines%20Information/Pages/MedSupplyProbs.aspx).

Please also continue to use the NHSGG&C Pharmacy Services generic email address – PRESCRIBING@ggc.scot.nhs.uk – to report shortages and seek advice. This email inbox continues to be monitored regularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**How can I minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission within/outside my pharmacy?**

Please refer to the joint letter issued by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS), Association of Pharmacy Technicians UK (APTUK) and the pharmacy regulatory bodies across the UK: <https://www.rpharms.com/Portals/0/RPS-SocialDistancing-Letter-002.pdf>

* Discourage patients to wait in groups for the pharmacy to open – ensure you have clear signs advising social distancing
* discourage patients to wait in the pharmacy for prescription and consider measures such as texting to advise when scripts are ready for collection
* restrict the number of people entering the pharmacy at any one time
* tape marks on floor to highlight 6ft/2m safe distance from the counters and from each other
* consider all available options to protect your teams – e.g. Perspex screens, visors etc
* regularly clean counters and any waiting areas as airborne viruses can settle on hard surfaces and remain infectious
* ensure staff wash hands/use alcohol hand gel regularly
* reduce access to the consulting room – only use when absolutely necessary and ensure it is cleaned after any use

**Am I still expected to submit my revalidation records?**

The GPhC have released the following statement:

*“Due to the challenges and pressures on the pharmacy sector at this time, and the increasing number of cases of COVID-19, we have decided to postpone the revalidation submission date for those registrants who are due to submit between 20 March and 31 August 2020 (inclusive).*

*Those registrants with a submission date between March and August 2020 will not be required to submit their four CPD records, one peer discussion and one reflective account on their normal submission due date. Instead, they will be required to submit their full revalidation record on their normal submission due date in 2021 i.e. with their renewal in 2021.*

***Please note that all registrants will be expected to renew their registration as normal in 2020; the postponement only applies to the submission of revalidation records.***

*We will review the situation for registrants due to submit their revalidation records after 31 August 2020 at a later date and will keep you updated.”*

**Further Information and useful links**

GPhC Website

<https://www.pharmacyregulation.org/contact-us/coronavirus-latest-updates>

Health Protection Scotland Website

<https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/a-to-z-of-topics/covid-19/>

NHSGG&C Community Pharmacy Website

<https://www.communitypharmacy.scot.nhs.uk/nhs-boards/nhs-greater-glasgow-clyde/>

In particular; the ‘Index of Communications’, daily ‘Key Messages’ and ‘CPS Guidance Videos’.

RPS has opened some of its most popular reference sources to non-members:

<https://www.rpharms.com/about-us/news/details/MEP-and-our-most-popular-Pharmacy-Guides-now-available-for-whole-profession>