

Tips for Protecting Community Pharmacists and Pharmacy Staff from COVID-19



Pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, student pharmacists, and other pharmacy staff are frontline responders to the COVID-19 pandemic. Staying protected and healthy while caring for patients is a top priority. Consider the following tips for workflow improvements that can decrease the risk of exposure to infected patients.

Prescription Orders and Refills

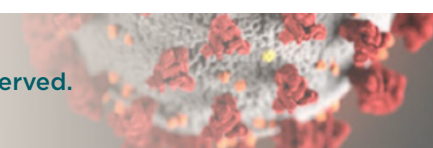
- Advise providers and patients to send electronic or telephone prescriptions only to avoid handling paper prescriptions.
- Do not handle or accept patient bottles for refills.
- Encourage patients to call in refills to avoid extended waiting at the pharmacy.
- Advise patients to have an ample supply of their medications to limit exposure by coming into the pharmacy.

Transactions

- All pharmacy staff handling money, cash, or credit cards should wear gloves.
- Request patients and caregivers use a credit card instead of the debit card function to avoid PIN input.
- Clean the credit card machine keypads between customers.
- CMS has suspended [Part D plan signature requirements](#); no signature is required.
- Maximize the use of drive-through, delivery service, and curbside pickup.
- Delivery personnel should wear gloves, and not enter the recipient's home.

Staff Considerations

- Wash hands frequently for 20 seconds with each washing, or use [hand sanitizer containing at least 70% alcohol](#).
- Immunizing pharmacists should don (put on) PPE when administering vaccines.
 - Note: Influenza and pneumococcal vaccines are strongly recommended during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the increased risk of serious secondary infection.
- Maintain social distancing when working within the pharmacy.
- Clean surfaces within the pharmacy regularly using [cleaners known to kill the virus](#).



Tips for Protecting Community Pharmacists and Pharmacy Staff from COVID-19 (continued)



Considerations for the Pharmacy

- Put physical barriers between patients and staff, such as shields at cash registers (e.g., plexiglass, clear shower curtains). CDC recommends that [barrier controls](#) are a good strategy, considering the current PPE shortage.
- When retail operations outside of the pharmacy must remain open, 6-foot standing distances (known as “social distancing”) should be established at check-out counters to assist with social distancing. Tape can be placed on the floor to mark the safe standing distance.
- Consider removing all customer seating to limit surfaces that may not be able to be cleaned and disinfected.
- Limit the number of individuals permitted inside at any one time to fewer than 10 people (including pharmacy staff) to facilitate social distancing.
- Please don't forget HIPAA privacy: the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services \(HHS\)](#) [clarified](#): “The protections of the Privacy Rule are not set aside during an emergency.”

***Disclaimer:** Information related to the COVID-19 pandemic is changing rapidly and continuously. The material and information contained in this publication is believed to be current as of the date included on this document. The American Pharmacists Association assumes no responsibility for the accuracy, timeliness, errors or omission contained herein. Links to any sources do not constitute any endorsement of, validity, or warranty of the information contained on any site. The user of these materials should not under any circumstances solely rely on, or act based on this publication. Pharmacy professionals retain the responsibility for using their own professional judgment and practicing in accordance with all rules, regulations, and laws governing the pharmacy practice within their jurisdiction.*

