

Professional Notice

To: Pharmacy Practitioners
From: Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists
Date: March 14, 2020
Re: COVID-19 Guidance

The NSCP recognizes that you are an important healthcare provider on the frontline of Nova Scotia's response to COVID-19. As the NSCP continues to work with healthcare stakeholders, we are providing you with the following direction and guidance at this time.

- As patients attempt to secure their personal supply of medication by requesting early refills and/or larger quantities, it is important that pharmacists use their position as the healthcare system's medication stewards to balance the needs of individual patients with the societal need to maintain an adequate supply.
- The multitude of individuals anticipated to be needing healthcare in the coming weeks will be a challenge for our already strained healthcare system and it is critical that pharmacists use the full extent of their authority to address patients' drug-related problems and needs, including through prescribing.
- Pharmacy managers should review their pandemic and emergency preparedness plans and be prepared to implement them. These should include a plan for scenarios where no pharmacist is available to open the pharmacy because of illness or quarantine.
- Pharmacies need to take the necessary steps to minimize community transmission of the virus, including:
 - [posting a sign](#) at the pharmacy's entrance and at pharmacy counters communicating that individuals who are symptomatic or believe they may have been exposed to COVID-19 should contact 811 and not enter the pharmacy.
 - directing individuals to use the province's online [self-assessment tool](#) to determine if they should call 811 for further assistance.
 - being vigilant in maintaining the cleanliness of the pharmacy, especially patient contact areas, and making best efforts to support [Public Health's recommendations](#) for social distancing in the pharmacy to protect pharmacy staff and patients.

While all healthcare providers are regularly called upon to bring the full extent of their knowledge and skills to meet the public's healthcare needs, during a crisis this call becomes urgent. You will each be deciding your personal commitment to providing care at this time and are encouraged to use the following documents prepared by the NSCP to inform these important decisions:

- NSCP [Standard of Care During a Crisis](#)
- NSCP [A Pharmacy Professional's Duty During a Crisis: An Ethical Framework](#)

As a community healthcare provider, you are also uniquely positioned to provide important information to the NSCP and Public Health on the health status of your community. Please use this [feedback form](#) to contribute information you think is relevant.

The NSCP is actively involved in pandemic planning with provincial and national stakeholders on a number of issues, including:

- maintaining access to prescribed medications, including methadone and buprenorphine/naloxone, should pharmacist illness or quarantine result in temporary pharmacy closures;
- pharmacy procedures should a symptomatic COVID-19 patient present at the pharmacy; and
- delivering of medications to patients who are in self-isolation or quarantine.

This is an evolving situation that is being continuously monitored to inform Nova Scotia's public health and clinical responses. It is important that we all make our best effort to keep ourselves and our community healthy.

Helpful resources:

- Government of Nova Scotia [COVID-19 website](#)
- Government of Canada [COVID-19 website](#)
- World Health Organization [COVID-19 website](#)