



GUIDANCE FOR PHARMACIES WHEN A PHARMACY STAFF MEMBER IS COVID-19 POSITIVE OR A CLOSE CONTACT

Community pharmacies and pharmacy teams are on the frontline in supporting patients and the public during this challenging period. Pharmacies across the province have taken various steps to minimize the risk of COVID-19 for their staff and their patients. However, given the nature of the virus and the presence of community transmission in Nova Scotia, there is reasonable risk that some pharmacy staff members may test positive at some point.

This document has been developed by the NSCP, in conjunction with NS Public Health, to provide guidance to community pharmacies on steps to take should a pharmacy staff member require COVID-19 screening, test positive and/or be identified as a close contact.

Note: where Public Health direction differs from what is provided in this guidance document, community pharmacies must comply with Public Health direction.

Pharmacy Staff Member is Exhibiting Symptoms

A separate screening hotline for healthcare workers has been established and is available to community pharmacy practitioners.

- **Community pharmacy practitioners who may have been exposed or are showing symptoms of COVID-19 can call 1-833-547-0059 for screening.**
- It is important for all pharmacy staff members to remove themselves from the pharmacy immediately if they are exhibiting symptoms until they are able to be tested.
- Pharmacy staff members who are awaiting COVID-19 test results **must self-isolate** until their test results are known.

Pharmacy Staff Member Tests Positive for COVID-19

Public Health will provide direction to the staff member and the pharmacy if a team member tests positive. **Public Health direction must be followed.** However, pharmacy owners and pharmacy managers may wish to take safety measures above and beyond what is advised by Public Health to protect pharmacy staff and the public.

- Pharmacy practitioners who test positive **must not return to work** until they meet all return to work criteria or are authorized by Public Health.
- If there are close contacts identified in the pharmacy, Public Health will notify those employees directly. Public Health may also contact the pharmacy manager/team lead if there are broader workplace impacts or

their contact tracing requires them to talk to employees who are close contacts of a case. The employee may also directly notify the pharmacy manager/team lead of a positive test result.

- If contacted by Public Health, the pharmacy manager/team lead should follow Public Health direction.
- Typically, there is no Public Health requirement to close the pharmacy for cleaning. Under unusual direction, there may be a requirement to do so. Pharmacies are expected to be adhering to the NSCP's [*Pharmacy Infection Control Measures During COVID-19*](#) guidance. If the pharmacy chooses to or is instructed to temporarily close, the pharmacy manager must follow the [*Temporary Pharmacy Closures Policy*](#) including promptly contacting the NSCP.

Return to Work Protocol After Testing Positive for COVID-19

A pharmacy staff member who is COVID-19 positive can be deemed recovered and able to return to work if they:

- are a minimum of 10 days from symptom onset; and
- do not present with a fever and are not taking antipyretics; and
- their acute clinical symptoms have resolved.

Absence of cough is not required for those known to have chronic cough or who are experiencing reactive airways post-infection. If all criteria noted above have been met, the pharmacy staff member can be cleared to return to work. **If one criterion is present, the pharmacy staff member cannot be considered recovered and should not return to work.**

A pharmacy staff member who is COVID-19 positive and asymptomatic can be deemed recovered and able to return to work when at least 10 days have passed since laboratory confirmation.

Pharmacy Staff Members Who Are A Close Contact of a COVID-19 Case

Pharmacy staff members should follow the protocol and algorithm set out below to determine what form of isolation is necessary following close contact with a COVID-19 case and the necessary precautions when implementing work-isolation.

- Pharmacy staff members who are a close contact of a COVID-19 case and have **tested positive must self-isolate at home** following Public Health's direction until all return to work criteria are met.
- Pharmacy staff members who are identified as a close contact of a COVID-19 case, have **tested negative** for COVID-19, and **are not deemed critical to continued pharmacy operations** should self-isolate at home and monitor for new fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose or headache until 14 days from last exposure.
- Work-isolation can be implemented for pharmacy staff members who have had close contact with a positive case, have **tested negative** and are not showing symptoms, and are **deemed critical to continued pharmacy operations** (e.g., pharmacy operations could not continue if the staff member was required to self-isolate at home for 14 days). See work-isolation requirements in algorithm below.

Pharmacy staff member identified as a COVID-19 close contact by Public Health

Positive test result from Public Health?

NO

YES

Pharmacy staff member must self-isolate until all return to work criteria are met

- If the pharmacy staff member is **not critical** to continued pharmacy operations, they should self-isolate at home and monitor for new fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose or headache until 14 days from last exposure.
- If the pharmacy staff member is **critical** to continued pharmacy operations, they **may return to work if they comply with the following work-isolation requirements for a period of 14 days from their last contact with a positive COVID-19 case:**
 - 1) Perform twice-daily temperature checks.
 - 2) Wear a procedure/surgical mask at all times in the pharmacy, including:
 - i. Breaks and travelling to/from them; and
 - ii. Washroom breaks and travelling to/from them.
 - 3) ONLY remove the procedure/surgical mask when eating, and always with proper donning and doffing technique.
 - 4) Employ social distancing (>2m) and appropriate hand hygiene at all times in the pharmacy.
 - 5) Self-isolate at home in accordance with Public Health guidance.
 - 6) If ANY of COVID-19 symptoms appear [fever (signs of fever), cough (new or worsening), sore throat, runny nose, and headache] cease work and advise the pharmacy manager immediately.
 - 7) Only works in ONE pharmacy.