

Community Pharmacies and COVID -19

April 9, 2020

1. What happens when a pharmacy employee tests positive for COVID-19?

Public Health is notified of all positive cases of COVID-19 through automated processes with local labs and the Roy Romanow Provincial Laboratory.

Public Health contacts the case as soon as possible and determines their history of symptoms, obtains a detailed history of movement including travel; businesses visited; individuals they have interacted with; health care facilities they may have visited; and indoor spaces they may have entered.

They develop a list of persons who may be contacts and prioritizes them based on those who may be most at risk of being infected with the virus. They then start calling all contacts in order of priority and inform each of them they have been exposed to the virus. The identity of the positive case is not revealed.

The contacts are offered information and guidance based on their situation. This will mean either testing, self-isolation or self-monitoring.

For more information on COVID-19 please visit the [Government of Saskatchewan's COVID-19 site](#).

2. If a pharmacy knows that an employee has tested positive and feels they need to take immediate action to further mitigate risk, what can they do to reach out to employees while maintaining confidentiality?

The employer may advise staff that there is a positive case of COVID-19 in the workplace without revealing information regarding the case. Let employees know the measures that the business is taking to ensure their safety, such as cleaning and disinfecting, physical distancing, only allowing a certain number of customers in at once, installing Plexiglas shields, etc. (see #7 below). Advise employees that they may be contacted by public health if they have been named as a contact. In some situations, the workplace may not be an issue because the person was not infectious while at work.

Public Health will work with you to determine if you should shut down the business.

For general information to assist in implementing COVID-19 response requirements, please refer to provincial government's [COVID-19 Public Health Measures page](#).

3. If a pharmacy staff member recently travelled outside of Canada and is returning to work as an employee, what should I do?

Advise the employee that it is mandatory that anyone arriving in Saskatchewan from outside of Canada self-isolate and monitor symptoms for 14 days upon their arrival. If they develop any symptoms, they are to contact 811 and follow their advice.

Certain essential workers are allowed an exemption to 14 day isolation, if they are supervised by Infection Prevention and Control or Occupational Health and Safety in the workplace, including:

- specific health care workers;
- workers who provide emergency health care services;
- workers who are essential to maintain essential services;
- workers who maintain supply chain; or
- rail, airline and transport crews.

The exemption allows essential workers to continue to work. When not working, the individual should be self-isolating for the 14-day period.

4. If a pharmacy manager/owner learns that a staff member has been exposed to a confirmed COVID-19 case (e.g., via the staff member directly, or via a public health unit), what should they do?

If staff have been identified as a contact, they will be notified by Public Health and advised what to do depending on their level of exposure. If staff have further questions, they can visit the [Government of Saskatchewan's COVID-19 site](#).

Encourage staff to stay at home as much as possible, to only go out for essentials, self-monitor and maintain proper physical distancing. If they develop symptoms, they can access the self-assessment tool on the [Government of Saskatchewan's COVID-19 site](#) and follow the directions.

You may want to review your current cleaning procedures and enhance the cleaning schedule as needed. You may also want to set up hand sanitizing stations to support employees with frequent hand hygiene while at work.

5. If a pharmacy staff member reports that they have COVID-19 symptoms, what should I do?

If the staff member is at work, advise them to go home immediately, access the self-assessment tool, and/or or call Healthline 811 and follow the advice provided.

If an employee has gone home sick from the workplace, their work areas should be cleaned and disinfected.

6. Should staff at the pharmacy wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to decrease the risk for themselves and their customers?

There is currently a global shortage of PPE that is affecting the healthcare system. N95 respirators, surgical/procedure masks, protective eyewear, and gloves are the critical PPE required to protect healthcare workers when caring for those infected with the COVID-19 virus.

Most workers will not require PPE for protection against the COVID-19 virus unless they are in situations similar to health care workers. Non-PPE controls should be put in place by employers as much as possible.

For more information on the use of PPE go to https://www.saskatchewan.ca/-/media/files/coronavirus/info-for-health-care-providers/ppe/covid19-appropriate-use-ppe_employers.pdf

7. What measures can the pharmacy take to protect staff and the public health?

Enhance the store's sanitation plan and schedule. Increase cleaning and disinfection of commonly contacted areas. Commonly contacted areas include doorknobs, refrigerator handles, till conveyances, keyboards, bathroom surfaces, countertops, PIN pads, hand baskets and light switches. Keep in mind that common touch areas include those in both customer and employee accessed areas.

Ensure staff are practicing proper hygiene proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette including:

- Washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Use hand sanitizer when hands are not visibly dirty and handwashing isn't available.
- Only use hand sanitizer approved by Health Canada (DIN or NPN number).
- Avoid touching your face, mouth, nose and eyes.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue, then immediately dispose of the tissue and wash hands. If a tissue is not available, cough or sneeze into their elbow, not their hands.

Ensure employee and public washrooms are always well stocked with liquid soap and paper towels, and that warm running water is available. Garbage bins should be emptied frequently.

Provide clean carryout bags for purchased products. Customers should be encouraged not to use their own containers, reusable bags or boxes.

Place hand sanitizer with a minimum of 70% ethyl alcohol in dispensers near doors, pay stations and other high-touch locations for customers and staff use. Hand sanitizers should be approved by Health Canada and have a DIN or NPN.

Promote physical distancing of customers:

- Use physical queue line controls, such as crowd control cordons at entrances and checkout lines. Place markers (e.g. tape or cones) every two metres as visible cues to support physical distancing.
- Make announcements at regular intervals over store speaker reminding customers to stay two meters away from each other.
- Have clear signs in multiple locations that indicate the maximum number of customers and staff a store can accommodate at any one time.
- Consider monitoring the number of customers and staff entering and leaving the store. Once the maximum number of persons for a store is reached, allow one person in for every person who leaves.

Limit the handling of credit cards, debit cards and loyalty cards wherever possible, by allowing customers to scan. There is currently no evidence that COVID-19 can be passed on to others by touching or handling cash.

Employees who handle cash or credit cards should practice proper hand hygiene. When hands are not visibly soiled and between customer interactions, hand sanitizer can be used. Employees should wash their hands with soap and water when hands are visibly soiled, before and after any breaks, at the beginning and end of their shift, and before preparing food.

Glove use is not required. If staff are using gloves, they should be changed after every interaction and when changing tasks. Hand hygiene must be performed between every glove change (hand sanitizer or hand washing with soap and water).

Ask customers who arrive with cold, influenza or COVID-19-like symptoms (fever, cough or breathing issues) to return home and use a delivery service instead.

All workers, especially those in constant contact with the public, should self-monitor for symptoms and use the self-assessment tool available on the Government of Saskatchewan's website at <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/health-care-administration-and-provider-resources/treatment-procedures-and-guidelines/emerging-public-health-issues/2019-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-self-assessment>.

Workplaces are encouraged to have plans in place for increased worker absences due to illness or isolation. Workplaces should have a workplace illness policy. If policies do not exist or are not in line with COVID-19 recommendations, workplaces should ensure the following:

- Sick employees should stay home or be sent home from work.
- The Government of Saskatchewan provides an online COVID19 self-assessment screening tool to help determine if illness may be COVID-19. The tool provides ill workers with next steps depending on responses.
<https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/health-care-administration-and-provider-resources/treatment-procedures-and-guidelines/emerging-public-health-issues/2019-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-self-assessment>