

COVID-19 SUMMARY GUIDANCE #9

Use of masks

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PHARMACY PERSONNEL

1. Pharmacy staff should wear a face mask to protect themselves from infection, and to avoid disease transmission in case pharmacy personnel become infected.
2. Pharmacy staff may need to wear a combination of gloves, a gown, a face mask and/or a face shield or goggles, depending on the tasks they perform and their personal situation.
3. The use of a mask alone is insufficient to provide an adequate level of protection. Hand and face hygiene should be performed frequently.
4. Keep a distance of 1-2 metres from patients and members of the public to prevent person-to-person spread via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person speaks, coughs or sneezes
5. Disinfect any surfaces that may be touched by patients or members of the public.
6. Respirators are generally not required in the community pharmacy setting, but are required by healthcare professionals involved in aerosol-generating procedures.
7. Short hair or tied-up hair, avoiding long beards, and avoiding the use of jewellery, watches and make up all contribute to infection prevention and more efficient use of masks, respirators and goggles.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PUBLIC

Members of the public are recommended to wear a mask in the following circumstances:

1. When taking care of a person with suspected COVID-19 infection.
2. If they have symptoms such as coughing, sneezing or fever.
3. If they belong to higher-risk groups, including older adults (particularly those older than 65 years) and people with underlying health conditions, and are in public places or in the presence of others.
4. If they need to leave home for any reason when under quarantine (i.e., in preventive isolation following contact with a confirmed or potentially positive case of COVID-19), to prevent potential asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic transmission.

Masks are effective only when used in combination with frequent hand-cleaning with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.

HOW TO PUT ON, USE, TAKE OFF AND DISPOSE OF A MASK

1. Before touching the mask, clean hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.
2. Before putting on the mask, inspect it for tears and holes.
3. Orient which side is the top side (where the metal strip or stiff edge is).
4. Ensure the proper side of the mask (usually the coloured side) faces outwards.
5. Place the mask onto your face. Pinch the metal strip or stiff edge of the mask so it moulds to the shape of your nose.
6. Ensure the mask covers your mouth and chin.
7. After use, take off the mask; remove the elastic loops from behind the ears while keeping the mask away from your face and clothes. Avoid touching potentially contaminated surfaces of the mask.
8. Discard the mask in a closed bin immediately after use.
9. Perform hand hygiene after touching or discarding the mask. Use alcohol-based hand rub or, if they are visibly soiled, wash your hands with soap and water.

For details and supporting references, consult the complete guidance document at www.fip.org/coronavirus

This document is based on the available evidence and recommendations of reputable organisations at the time of publishing. It will be updated as new knowledge becomes available. 26 March 2020.

Sources: WHO and US CDCs, 2020