



Community Pharmacy Advice sheet – Coronavirus symptoms (2020/21)

Pharmacy Advice for person presenting with Coronavirus symptoms

The most common symptoms of coronavirus infection are recent onset of:

- a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (patient does not need to measure their temperature); **OR**
- a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if patient normally has a cough, it may be worse than usual); **OR**
- a loss of or change in sense of smell or taste.

Patients with any of these symptoms should be advised NOT to attend the pharmacy in person and contact instead via phone

Advice for symptomatic patients:

1. Testing and isolation requirements*:

Everyone you live with must stay at home. You should arrange a test for COVID-19 via the GOV.UK website at <http://www.nhs.uk/ask-for-a-coronavirus-test> or by calling 119

While waiting for your test or if you receive a positive diagnosis for COVID-19:

- you'll need to stay at home for at least 10 days from when your symptoms started;
- after 10 days from when your symptoms started:
 - if you have not had a high temperature for 48 hours, you no longer need to self-isolate
 - if you still have a high temperature, you need to self-isolate until your temperature has returned to normal for 48 hours
- you do not need to self-isolate if you only have a cough or loss of sense of smell/taste after 10 days, as these symptoms can last for several weeks after the infection has gone
- If you live with someone who has symptoms you'll need to stay at home and self-isolate also. If the person with symptoms tests positive for COVID₁₉, everyone in the household without symptoms will need to self-isolate for 14 days from the day the first person in the home started having symptoms.
- However, if you develop symptoms during this 14-day period, you'll need to stay at home for at least 10 days from the day your symptoms started (regardless of what day you are on in the original 14-day period). Follow the advice above on when to end self-isolation.

If you receive a negative diagnosis for COVID-19:

You can stop self-isolating if you have a negative test, as long as:

- everyone you live with who has symptoms of COVID-19 has tested negative – you need to keep self-isolating if someone in your household tests positive, or develops symptoms of COVID-19 and has not been tested;
- you feel well enough, and have not had a raised temperature for more than 48 hours.
- you are not a close contact of a confirmed case

If you develop new or worsening symptoms, you should self-isolate and can arrange to be re-tested.

**Please note: this is the current testing advice and isolation requirements in Northern Ireland as of 20/10/20. Pharmacists should check this information is still applicable by referring to the latest information from the Public Health Agency (PHA) on testing for COVID-19 and isolation requirements, available on the*

2. Advice on symptom management:

- **Treating a high temperature:**
 - Get lots of rest
 - Drink plenty of fluids (preferably water) to avoid dehydration – drink enough so that your urine is light yellow and clear
 - Take paracetamol or ibuprofen if necessary

- **Treating a cough:**
 - If you have a cough, it's best to avoid lying on your back
 - Lie on your side or sit upright instead
 - To help ease a cough, try having a teaspoon of honey. But do not give honey to babies under 12 months.

- **Things to try if you're feeling breathless:**
 - If you're feeling breathless, it can help to keep your room cool
 - Try turning the heating down or opening a window. Do not use a fan as it may spread the virus.
 - Breathing slowly in through your nose and out through your mouth, with your lips together like you're gently blowing out a candle
 - Sitting upright in a chair
 - Relaxing your shoulders, so you're not hunched
 - Leaning forward slightly – support yourself by putting your hands on your knees or on something stable like a chair
 - Try not to panic if you're feeling breathless. This can make it worse.

- **Avoiding the spread of infection:**
 - Advise patient on good hand hygiene
 - This includes washing hands frequently and thoroughly for 20 seconds throughout the day with soap and water
 - Cover sneezes with disposable tissues or into the crook of your elbow if tissues are not available
 - Dispose of tissues in a rubbish bin and immediately wash your hands
 - Avoid touching your eyes, mouth or nose if hands are not clean
 - Avoiding sharing of towels and for children, discouraging the sharing of toys with an infected child.

Patients should be directed to the following link for further information on symptom management

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19>

3. If patient's condition deteriorates:

- If your symptoms worsen during home isolation or are no better after 10 days, contact your GP practice or out-of-hours medical centre
- For a medical emergency dial 999