

Dr Rose Marie Parr, BSc(Hons) MSc PHD FFRPS FRPharmS

T: 0131 244 9685 email: [rosemarie.parr@gov.scot](mailto:rosemarie.parr@gov.scot)

Community Pharmacy Contractors  
Community Pharmacy Scotland

CC: Directors of Pharmacy

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Dear Colleagues

## **PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)**

Firstly, let me restate my thanks to you all for your ongoing efforts and support during this immensely difficult time, as Scotland prepares for the challenge that we face as a country to slow down the spread of COVID-19 and reduce the peak in order to save lives. The community pharmacy network continues to play a key role, by ensuring that people get the advice and medicines they need. And I am extremely proud of the efforts of each and every one of you.

The public messaging from the Scottish Government has included an increasingly clear message to individuals with symptoms characteristic of COVID-19 (new continuous cough and/or fever) that they should not present in community pharmacy, general practice or accident or emergency department, but should consult the NHS Inform website for further advice. This is important as it will help to protect pharmacy teams and other healthcare professionals.

Health Protection Scotland (HPS) has published COVID-19 Advice for Pharmacies. This advice is available at <https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/a-to-z-of-topics/covid-19/>. As this is an evolving situation I recommend the website is checked frequently to ensure you have the most up to date guidance. To support community pharmacies, we are making available a supply of disposable plastic aprons and gloves from the Scottish Government's national stockpile for the purpose of environmental cleaning. These will be distributed to you week commencing Monday 30 March as part of your Alliance Healthcare delivery. We do not envisage a further supply will be required but will keep this under review.

Gloves and an apron are the standard PPE that is required environmental cleaning for any healthcare setting where a patient or member of the public has spent time in a room whilst symptomatic with an infectious agent such as a respiratory pathogen. A fluid resistant surgical face mask is not required. I thought it would be helpful to set out why this is the case. COVID-19 is transmitted by respiratory droplets, these droplets are expelled from an

infected individual to a non-immune individual by coughing and sneezing. This requires the person to be within one metre of the infectious person. The current guidance and the Government messaging recommends that no one attends the pharmacy with respiratory symptoms. In addition the current policy advises social distancing (greater than 1 metre) therefore if an infected individual does attend the pharmacy and inadvertently coughs or sneezes without tissues these droplets would not be transmitted via this route.

The other indirect method of transmission is via contact with contaminated surfaces. This could be after an infected individual cough or sneezes, without using a tissue and washing their hands, and then touching a surface or the virus can be transferred to another person via their hands, if not removed by environmental cleaning. It is therefore important that during this pandemic cleaning frequencies are increased on frequently touched areas such as counter tops. The final point to reiterate is that this is a widespread community virus and a healthcare professional would be at no greater risk of contracting this virus during work than out of work. Social distancing has been applied as a control measure, as the wearing of masks routinely by the public has not shown to be effective in control of COVID-19 and other coronaviruses.

The HPS guidance currently states that if an individual attends the pharmacy suffering from respiratory symptoms or a new continuous cough and/or high temperature, they should be advised to return home and consult the NHS Inform website for further advice. The website includes 'stay at home advice' for individuals with these symptoms, plus any members of their household to follow. On leaving the pharmacy, if the individual has had contact with the counter top, it should be cleaned with disinfectant wipes. The use of PPE is not required for this activity.

In the event that you need to call an ambulance for the individual, dial 999 and inform the ambulance call handler of the concerns about COVID-19 infection. While awaiting ambulance transfer, show the individual into a room. Seat them at the rear of the room and make sure that no other customers/individuals enter. Leave the room if safe to do so. If you have to enter the room, stay at least 2 metres away from the individual if possible. Once the individual has left the room in which they have been isolated the room should not be used. The room door should remain shut until it has been cleaned with detergent and disinfectant. Once this process has been completed, the room can be put back into use immediately. Follow the guidance for environmental cleaning following a suspected case being held in a room prior to transfer (in section 6 of the Guidance for primary care which can be found at <https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/a-to-z-of-topics/covid-19/>). During such environmental cleaning it is recommended that the person undertaking the clean should wear PPE consisting of disposable plastic aprons and gloves.

This is one of a number of steps we are taking to support the community pharmacy network over the coming weeks and months.

Yours faithfully,



**Dr Rose Marie Parr**  
**Chief Pharmaceutical Officer**  
**Scottish Government**

