

Access to medicines during COVID-19

This fact sheet provides general advice to help you be prepared to ensure you can access your medicines safely during the COVID-19 pandemic.

During this time, contact your pharmacist or doctor if you have any questions about access to your medicines.

Be prepared – check your medicine supplies and prescriptions

Being prepared will help to ensure you have timely access to your medicines.

- > **CHECK** that you have enough of your medicines at home – about one month's supply is generally recommended. You do not need to stock up on large quantities of medicines. Over stocking may mean others may not be able to get their essential medicines. Discuss with your doctor if you need additional supplies.
- > **CHECK** your prescriptions – do you have prescriptions for your medicines and are they in date? If you need a new prescription make an appointment with your doctor ahead of time. Many medical clinics are now offering telehealth consultations, meaning you may be able to have a doctor's appointment from home.
- > **CHECK** that any health care plans you have, such as asthma or COPD action plans, are up to date and you know how to follow them.

How can I get my medicines if I'm in quarantine, self-isolating or staying at home?

Contact your doctor and/or pharmacy to discuss the options available, and to set up a plan that works best for you. You can use searches such as Google to locate your closest doctor or pharmacy if you are away from home.

Options to have your prescriptions sent to the pharmacy:

- > Talk to your doctor about sending any new prescriptions directly to your pharmacy.
- > Your pharmacy may already have your repeat prescriptions on file.
- > Ask someone to assist – for example a family member, friend or neighbour can take your prescriptions to the pharmacy for you.
- > Post your prescriptions to the pharmacy or drop them off via a secure and contactless method (i.e. secure letterbox).

Collecting your medicines:

- > Home delivery – talk to the pharmacy about delivery to your home or where you are staying; delivery may be made by a pharmacy staff member, Australia Post mail, couriers, or taxi services.
- > Ask someone to assist – a family member, friend or neighbour may collect your medicines from the pharmacy.

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Can I still go to the pharmacy to get my medicines?

Pharmacies are essential services and will remain open to provide medicines and advice to the community. You may wish to contact the pharmacy by phone or email if you need to discuss your medicines, and consider options to minimise in-person visits where possible.

DO NOT ATTEND A PHARMACY if you:

- > have been diagnosed with COVID-19,
- > have been tested for COVID-19 and are in self-isolation awaiting results, or
- > are in quarantine or isolation due to travel or close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case.

If you are unwell or at greater risk from COVID-19 (for example vulnerable populations, people aged over 70, immunosuppressed) consider contacting the pharmacy to discuss other arrangements for getting your medicines.

Can someone else pick up my prescription medicines for me?

Yes, someone else can collect your prescription medicines for you. The person collecting may need to provide your Medicare card details, and any concession/DVA card details if you have one. The person collecting may be asked for personal identification.

Can I get my medicines delivered to me?

Many pharmacies offer a home delivery service for medicines. Delivery may be made by a pharmacy staff member, couriers, Australia Post mail, or taxi services.

Contact your pharmacy to discuss the delivery options that may be available to you.

What if I'm running low or run out of my medicines?

Being prepared by checking your medicines and prescriptions will help to ensure you don't run out of your medicines. If you are running low or do run out, you should call and make an appointment with your doctor as soon as possible.

Under [emergency provisions during the COVID-19 pandemic](#), a pharmacist may be able to provide you with a supply of your regular medicines, without a prescription, if there is an immediate need. Contact your pharmacist to discuss the options available to you.

Should I stock up on my medicines?

Whilst you should ensure you have sufficient supplies, stocking up on large quantities of medicines is not necessary, and can mean others may not be able to get their essential medicines when they need them. Discuss with your doctor if you need additional supplies.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, pharmacists are required to assist in ensuring medicines are available to all by limiting the supply of some prescriptions and over-the-counter medicines to one pack or supply at a time.

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), part of the Australian Government Department of Health, is actively monitoring for any issues with medication supply that may arise as a result of COVID-19.

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Will pharmacies remain open during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Pharmacies are essential services ensuring availability of medicines and medicines information to the community, and will remain open during the COVID-19 pandemic.

You will notice some changes in the pharmacy to ensure social distancing and hygiene precautions, and it is important to comply with these. This may include restricting the number of customers in the pharmacy at any one time, directing customer flow through the pharmacy, or asking you to wait in your car or outside the pharmacy.

Over time, some pharmacies may also need to adjust their opening hours and/or days as a measure to maintain services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

How can I best protect myself, others and the pharmacy staff when attending a pharmacy?

- > Adhere to social distancing and keep approximately a 1.5 metre distance from people around you, especially in pharmacy waiting areas.
- > Consider waiting outside the pharmacy or in your car, or dropping your prescriptions off and returning at a later time when they are ready.
- > Avoid touching surfaces and products in the pharmacy, and clean your hands with hand sanitiser when entering and leaving the pharmacy.
- > If you are at greater risk of COVID-19 (older person, immunosuppressed) consider making other arrangements for getting your medicines without going to the pharmacy yourself.

How can I support my health professional during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Expect that things will be a little bit different for some time. Be patient and respectful. Health professionals and pharmacy staff are working to care for you and to serve the community. Keeping our health professionals healthy is important to enable them to continue to undertake their role in keeping you healthy.

Where can I get advice on the symptoms of COVID-19?

Call the National Coronavirus Helpline (1800 020 080) or the SA COVID-19 Information Line (1800 253 787) for information on coronavirus (COVID-19), or visit the [Australian Government Department of Health's website](#) or [SA Health website](#) for up to date information.

If you have serious symptoms, such as difficulty breathing, call 000 for urgent medical help.

For more information

Office of the Chief Pharmacist
Department for Health and Wellbeing
Email: Health.MTPP@sa.gov.au
www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/COVID2019

