

COVID-19 & Administration of Injections

Pharmacists will continue to be asked to provide administration of routine injections, scheduled vaccines, as well as vaccines for prevention of COVID-19.

When making decisions regarding this part of practice, consider the following:

Patients presenting with signs and symptoms and exposure criteria consistent with COVID-19 should be directed to call 811 and await instructions. Advise these patients not to enter the pharmacy; administration of injections in the community pharmacy setting for these patients is not advised.

For patients who exhibit no symptoms consistent with COVID-19, and who are requesting administration of an injection, keep in mind that health care workers (HCWs) should use a risk assessment approach before and during each patient interaction to evaluate the likelihood of exposure.

Initial screening may be done via telephone to gather information regarding the patient's health status.

There is a professional obligation to provide essential care (see [this link](#)) which must be balanced with appropriate self-protection by HCWs while providing that care.

While the risk to pharmacists administering an injection to a healthy patient is low, consider the possibility of mild or asymptomatic COVID-19 illness when screening.

While the principle of social distancing, in order to mitigate the risk of transmission of COVID-19, is appropriate during verbal interactions with patients, administration of medication creates the need for a different level of interaction.

Hand hygiene must be performed carefully, paying particular attention to during and after removal of PPE, and after leaving the patient care environment.

Use of a facial mask during the administration of an injection is required. If a pharmacist does not have access to masks and the administration is essential, then a pharmacist must refer the patient to an alternative health care provider who can safely administer the injection with the appropriate safety precautions.¹

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¹ From NB Public Health: Memo #2 - Mask Use in Health Care System - Port du masque dans le système de santé: "The NB Pandemic Task Force is now recommending that Mask-for-all-shift guidance be implemented across the health care system for all health care providers providing direct patient care. Pharmacists providing injections to clients involves direct patient care by a health care provider. Medical procedure face masks must be kept for health care workers and others providing direct care."

The use of gloves is not a requirement.² In fact, their use may be problematic.³

A procedural/surgical mask is appropriate. Medical or surgical facemasks are generally preferred over cloth face coverings for healthcare professionals (HCP) for source control. If there are shortages of facemasks, facemasks should be prioritized for HCP who need them for PPE. Cloth face coverings should NOT be worn instead of a respirator or facemask if more than source control is required.⁴

The use of N95 masks is to be reserved for aerosol generating procedures (e.g. tracheal intubation, non-invasive ventilation, tracheostomy, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, manual ventilation before intubation, bronchoscopy).⁵

Injections which are part of a regular schedule (for example, antipsychotics, cyanocobalamin, medroxyprogesterone) and require continuity of care should be prioritized. Earlier in the pandemic, postponing injections when that was possible was recommended; when community transmission and case numbers are low, risk assessment will more likely mean less urgent injections can safely be delivered.

² Patients may expect and request that pharmacists wear disposable gloves during medication administration. If so, the pharmacist may choose to agree, to comfort the patient, or explain/educate that gloves are not necessary during provision of medications; demonstrate to patient that handwashing or disinfection has taken place when appropriate.

³ **Gloves are required only for nasal vaccines.** Depending on their own specific point-of-care risk assessment, some pharmacists may also choose to wear gloves for influenza injections; if worn, they must be replaced after each immunization (sessional use or use of hand sanitizer or bleach solution on gloves for repeated use are not recommended)

⁴ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/pharmacies.html>

⁵ <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/files/aerosol-generating-medical-procedures-AGMPs.pdf>