**COVID-19: A MESSAGE FROM YOUR LOCAL PHARMACIES**

As the UK responds to the COVID-19 pandemic, community pharmacies in Somerset are working tirelessly to ensure that everyone’s medicines and healthcare needs will be met over the coming days and weeks.

Pharmacy teams are a critical part of the NHS and in the past weeks they have seen demand for Over- The-Counter (OTC) medicines, other products, advice and reassurance soar.

Pharmacy teams are under intense pressure at the moment, working on the front line of the health service often without any protection for their own health.

To help pharmacies to cope under the increasing pressure, today the Local Pharmaceutical Committee (LPC) is asking patients and members of the public to:

* Avoid pharmacies if you are showing symptoms of COVID-19: If you have a dry, persistent cough, fever or shortness of breath, please avoid entering your local pharmacies as you would any other healthcare setting.
* Be patient: All pharmacies are under immense pressure and working around the clock to ensure that you get what you need.
* Order medicines as normal: There is no need to stockpile medicines. Ordering extra prescriptions and buying more over the counter medicines than you need will contribute to disruption to the medicines supply chain, which is otherwise robust.

Pharmacies will remain open wherever possible, but you may see that some are now having to reduce the hours during which they can admit members of the public. This is to ensure that pharmacy teams can carry out tasks such as preparing prescriptions and restocking shelves so that these vital services can continue safely.

If you are displaying the symptoms of COVID-19, however mild, please stay at home and ask someone else to go to the pharmacy for you.

Michael Lennox, Chief Officer of the Somerset Local Pharmaceutical Committees (LPC) said:

“Community pharmacy teams are a really important part of the NHS, and like all other NHS workers they are under immense pressure at the moment. We are today asking patients and members to the public to take some very simple steps to help protect these teams so that pharmacies can continue to carry out their critical roles and ensure that everyone continues to get the medicines, help and support they need, when they need it.”

“You can also help us by only requesting your usual supply of medications when required and not try and do it early or order extra, to help the supply chain keep up with demand. We will make sure suitable provision is made for people self-isolating owing to illness or being in at risk groups.”

“Everyone must stay at home to help stop the spread of coronavirus. This includes people of all ages – even if you do not have any symptoms or other health conditions.”

Things you can do to stop the infection spreading:

* wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
* use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
* cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
* put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards
* stay 2 metres (3 steps) away from other people, if you need to go outside.

**Contact**

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