

Coronavirus: Prepare for the worst, hope for the best.

Is your pharmacy prepared to handle Coronavirus?

Are you protecting yourself, your employees and your patients to the best of your abilities?

What is your plan if your employees show symptoms?

What is your plan if you are forced into a short staffing situation?

As healthcare providers, there is a strong likelihood your practice and your personnel may be exposed patients infected with Coronavirus. This could not only come from casual social exposures outside of work, but also from patients who are infected, possibly infected, or unknowingly infected as they seek immune boosting or palliative treatments for Coronavirus. That puts your pharmacy closer to the front lines.

The good news (sort of):

The mortality rate seems to be relatively low for otherwise healthy individuals. Estimates are difficult to predict due to the rapid transmission and uncertainties with identifying infected persons. Presumptions for mortality are ranging anywhere from 3% to under 1%. The greater risk is the possibility that “healthier carriers” may infect the at-risk population (elderly or infirmed). With no current way to vaccinate against Coronavirus or treat infection, it is incumbent on everyone to limit their exposures and avoid spreading the disease to the best of their abilities.

Beyond the broader societal impact, how would an outbreak affect your operations? If you haven’t considered it, now is the time. You can’t isolate your people and your practice from exposure, but you might be able to limit the possible spread of Coronavirus internally. We would like to offer some suggestions based on practices at PCCA and contributed ideas from some of your colleagues.

Consider the following:

- Start with mandatory handwashing. Not only before and after breaks and lunch, but every hour. The closer the employee is to the public, the more important this practice is.
- Require anyone with direct patient contact to wear gloves. Change them regularly (every 1-2 hours).
- Discourage staff from touching their face often and tell them to be mindful of anything they put in or around their noses and mouths.
- Have hand sanitizer available throughout the pharmacy for employees and customers to use frequently. If you cannot source hand sanitizer, PCCA has formulations so you can make your own.

- Encourage employees not to share phones or keyboards. Try to assign workstations to specific employees with minimal overlap whenever possible. Disinfect and decontaminate phones, keyboards, and workstations frequently throughout the day.
- Make vitamins and nutritionals easy for your patients to find - perhaps a display close to the check-out. Although supplements cannot cure infection or prevent the disease, they may offer immune system support and could make exposures much more tolerable for many.
- DO NOT ALLOW EMPLOYEES SUSPECTED OF INFECTION TO COME TO WORK. This is going to be very difficult for small independent pharmacies with limited staff, but the alternative is even worse. Due to Coronavirus' contagious nature, a single infected employee can infect your entire staff in a very short span of time. What would happen if all or most of your staff become infected at the same time and nobody comes to work? It is far better to have 1-2 people missing than your entire team at once.
- If possible, proactively solicit standby personnel in case you need to call on them.
- Lastly, ask your employees to be mindful about social engagements outside of work. Employers cannot reasonably monitor and dictate how their employees live their lives outside of work, and nor should they. But by implementing mindful and forward thinking practices at work, you may encourage your employees to be more mindful of common sense practices outside of work.

Potential Vitamins and Supplements to highlight:


- **Vitamin B6** - vital to supporting biochemical reactions in the immune system.
- **Vitamin C** - one of the biggest immune system boosters of all. A lack of vitamin C can even make you more prone to getting sick
- **Vitamin D** - deficiency in vitamin D is associated with increased susceptibility to infection.
- **Vitamin E** - powerful antioxidant that helps the body fight off infection.
- **Zinc** – lowers oxidative stress and inflammation
- **Ashwagandha** - improves the body's defense by improving the cell-mediated immunity. Also possesses antioxidant properties to help protect against cellular damage caused by free radicals.

“If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail!”

— Benjamin Franklin

Also consider:

As measures are put in place, you may want to provide signage to the public acknowledging that all protective measures are **proactive** for their benefit. You want to avoid any unintended perceptions that your pharmacy is currently dealing with an identified exposure in the pharmacy. Your colleague has graciously agreed to allow us to share this example of their customer communications:



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URGENT CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

Dear Patients,


Please read this notice as it pertains to health related precautions. Due to the severity of the circumstances unfolding with Coronavirus and cases reported in Irving and Dallas County, Las Colinas Pharmacy is taking extra steps to prioritize our patient's safety. We are especially concerned with minimizing exposure to our high-risk patients, such as elderly and immunocompromised patients, who have to this point been the most severely impacted by the effects of this virus.

We wipe and clean our counters, cash register touchpads, and front door handles every 30 minutes. We are asking all of our patients who are experiencing cough, sore throat, chest congestion, fever, and/or any other flu-like symptoms please do not come inside the pharmacy. We especially encourage these patients, our high-risk patients, or any other patient who wants to minimize their potential exposure to utilize our Courier Services (at a small fee) or our no-charge Curbside Delivery temporary service- where upon your phone call our staff will bring out your prepared medications and over-the-counter items to your parking space at the pharmacy. Please provide payment information when calling if you would like to utilize either of these services to expedite processing. We also recommend patients fill 90 day supply on medications, if your insurance allows, and talk with us about synchronizing all medications to help reduce unnecessary trips to the pharmacy. If you need counseling on any medications or over-the-counter items our pharmacists will gladly help those in need over the phone.











Please remember that we have a number of patients who are on immunosuppressant drugs, undergoing chemotherapy, and suffer from autoimmune disorders – everyone's cooperation is much appreciated and is vital to help to protect the safety of everyone.

If you have any questions, please call Las Colinas Pharmacy at (972) 993-9700 Ext. 1

Sincerely,
Las Colinas Pharmacy Staff



Coronavirus (COVID-19), cold and flu: How can you tell the difference?*

	SYMPTOMS	CORONAVIRUS	COLD	FLU
	Sore throat	Sometimes	Common	Common
	Cough	Common	Common	Common
	Sneezing	—	Common	Sometimes
	Fever	Common	—	Common
	Body aches	Sometimes	Mild	Common
	Tiredness	Sometimes	Mild	Common
	Headache	—	—	Common
	Runny/stuffy nose	—	Common	Sometimes
	Nausea	—	—	Sometimes
	Shortness of breath	In severe cases	—	—

*Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, World Health Organization

†Information on COVID-19, including its symptoms, is still emerging.