

# PHARMACEUTICAL SOCIETY OF JAMAICA

ESTABLISHED 1928

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## PSJ Advisory: Medication Safety and Best Practices

The executive and membership of The Pharmaceutical Society of Jamaica (PSJ) join with The Ministry of Health and Wellness (MOHW) and other Health Professional Organizations in asking for all citizens to take precautions given by the reputable authorities. The Government and Ministry of Health and Wellness are giving regular updates to assist in protecting you. Information is also available from The World Health Organization (WHO), Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and other national associations. As stated in the publication of the International Pharmacy Association, Coronavirus infections can be prevented and an outbreak can be stopped through the active engagement of decision-makers, healthcare professionals, the media and the community, as demonstrated in previous coronavirus outbreaks such as in 2003 with SARS-CoV (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus) or in 2012 with MERS-CoV (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus).

The information shared here will focus on possible drug related issues and or concerns which may arise. Pharmacists, especially in the community practice are frequently the first point of contact for patients seeking relief from common illnesses. Pharmacists are committed to work hard, along with the Healthcare team to ensure that all patients are provided with optimum care to achieve their health goals. We commit to storing appropriate stocks of pharmaceutical products and medical sundries (medicines, masks, etc) to supply the demand, informing and educating the public, counselling, referring and collaborating with other health professionals, promoting disease prevention and infection control.

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## Information for the Patient:

1. Currently there is no specific medicine or vaccine to treat COVID-19, however, research teams have been striving to develop vaccines and treatments. It will take some time before such treatments or vaccines are available.
2. We are carefully monitoring all our patients, especially the high risk groups namely the elderly, patients with chronic diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and kidney disease.
3. Treatment is based on the symptoms and on the patient's clinical condition, and supportive care. Supportive treatment includes oxygen therapy, hydration and fever/pain management and antibiotics if bacterial co-infection is present.
4. Drugs which may be used in treating symptoms of the condition include antiviral medicines, antimicrobial agents, antipyretics and analgesics, corticosteroids, anti-asthma medicines, cough suppressants and expectorants.
5. Viruses are not treated with antibiotics, however if there is an underlying bacterial infection you may be prescribed one by your physician.
6. Paracetamol may be used for the treatment of pain and/or fever.
7. Keep rehydration salts available to be mixed and used as needed.
8. Ensure that you keep an extra two weeks or a month supply of medication if you have a chronic disease. Ensure that they are properly stored in a safe, cool, dry place.
9. The NHF and other insurance providers have made provisions for the extra supplies. Please consult your pharmacist for further information.
10. Healthy eating, boosting of immune system with Vitamin C, Zinc, B-complex and other natural herbs.
11. To help control further spread of the virus, pharmacists join in encouraging people who are suspected or confirmed to have the disease to be isolated from other patients and treated by health workers using strict infection control precautions.
12. Carefully assess your purchases; do not over stock on non-essentials. Check the expiry dates and use the shortest expiry date stock first.
13. If you have allergies or respiratory diseases like asthma or COPD, avoid excessive use of chemicals for sanitizing. 70% rubbing alcohol can be used to sanitize the hands and surfaces.
14. Make your own alcohol or chlorine wipes by using Wet Wipes (Even dried out ones) and soaking with 70% Rubbing Alcohol or Dilute Chlorine Cleaning Solution.
15. To make a Chlorine Cleaning Solution, use one teaspoonful (5ml) to one cup (240 ml) of water.
16. Be cautious when taking multivitamins and herbal products as excessive use may lead to drug interactions and adverse events.

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17. A medical mask is not required, as no evidence is available on its usefulness to protect non-sick persons. If masks are used, best practices should be followed on how to wear, remove, and dispose of them and on hand hygiene action after removal.

What are safe behaviors to expect at your Pharmacy?

1. Your Pharmacist will frequently clean hands by using alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water before and after processing your prescription.
2. Your pharmacist will provide education and counselling to assist you in managing your condition.
3. When coughing and sneezing, cover the mouth and nose with a flexed elbow or tissue – throw the tissue away immediately and sanitize/wash hands.
4. Practice Social Distancing while waiting to be attended to. You will be reminded to do this by your pharmacist or pharmacy personnel.
5. Avoid close contact with anyone who has fever and cough, if possible, drop off prescriptions and pick up when completed.
6. If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing call your medical care provider early and share previous travel history with your healthcare provider.
7. Pharmacy management must ensure a clean safe environment by having adequate cleaning and disinfection of the property.
8. Adequate space or crowd control to prevent overcrowding as stipulated by MOHW guidelines.

Pharmacists are credible sources of patient information. Pharmacists and pharmacies have developed many easy to understand informative materials (posters, leaflets, websites, text messages, app alerts, etc) for the community. The PSJ encourages its members to get involved in sharing credible and reliable information obtained from resources contained in guidelines such as FIP, that may be relevant to local needs. This information will be disseminated via our website, social media, other community organizations and individuals. We can flatten the curve by doing all we can to support the fight to prevent spread and gain control over the coronavirus SARS COVID-19.

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## References

Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 outbreak: Information and interim guidance for pharmacists and the pharmacy workforce <https://www.fip.org/coronavirus> Assessed 14/03/2020

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information for Healthcare Professionals  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html> Assessed 14/03/2020

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Regards

Dr. Ernestine Watson  
**PRESIDENT**