

COVID-19 Care in the Community - Case Management in Pharmacy Operational Guide

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Medication Management Consult: COVID-19 Self-care Symptom management

Eligibility Criteria:

Clients who are in COVID-19 mandatory isolation due to being COVID-19 *positive* can have a consultation with a pharmacist via phone or virtually and be supplied:

- Paracetamol
- Oral rehydration supplements, such as Electral® or Pedialyte®

Referrals for this service must come from:

- Prescriber via email or phone or noted on prescription.
- Welfare or other agencies such as Tihei Mauri Ora and the local hubs who provide support.
- Health Hawke's Bay.
- General Practice.
- DHB Services.
- Client or whānau self-referral.

Background

There is no specific cure for COVID-19. Treatment is aimed at easing symptoms. The symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, headaches and body aches, blocked or runny nose, sore throat, cough, diarrhoea, and vomiting. Most patients will recover well with rest and plenty of fluids. Pharmacists are well placed to be able to consult patients on, and supply medication for, symptom management. The Medication Management Consult Service funds pharmacists to be able to do so.

What is the process?

Once the Pharmacy is alerted that the client is isolating; contact the client and reinforce that they may not leave isolation to visit their pharmacy. Consultation patient for COVID-19 symptom management via telehealth, ensuring the patient's privacy is maintained and mana upheld.

1. Assess the patient for signs of respiratory compromise

Refer the patient to the GP if any of the following:

- Severe fatigue or lethargy.
- Talking with single words or short sentences.
- Pausing between sentences to catch their breath.

2. Assess the hydration status of the patient

Refer patient with increasing symptoms of dehydration to the GP:

- Dizziness/light-headedness making it hard to stand
- Sunken skin.
- Confusion.
- Rapid heartbeat/breathing.

- Little or no urination.

3. Ask about patient co-morbidities and medications

- Pregnancy: ensure the patient's lead maternity carer (LMC) is aware of the COVID-19 positive status.
- If patient has one or more of the conditions listed below, see individual Operational guide:
 - Heart failure
 - Cardiovascular disease
 - Adrenal suppression
 - Diabetes
 - CPAMS
 - Currently taking any of the SADMANS medicines:
 - S – SGLT2 Inhibitors
 - A – ACE inhibitor
 - D - Diuretics
 - M - Metformin
 - A – Angiotensin receptor blockers (including Entresto)
 - N – Non-steroidal anti-inflammatories
 - S – Sulfonylureas

4. Assess symptoms and manage as per table below:

Symptom	Management advice	When to tell a patient to contact a doctor
Fever	Paracetamol**	Persistent fever > 38°C.
Cough, sore throat, runny nose	Paracetamol** or, in adults, standard cold and flu over-the-counter medications.	Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, severe cough, coughing up more than streaks of blood (streaks of blood are very common). If severe symptoms, phone 111.
Nausea, loss of appetite, vomiting, diarrhoea	Oral rehydration supplements, such as Electral*** or Pedialyte*** Drink frequent small amounts of fluid.	Unable to drink, more than 4 episodes of diarrhoea a day, significant reduction in urine output (less than 50% of usual daily output), dizziness or fainting.
Headache, body aches	Paracetamol** or ibuprofen (use with caution see below).	Severe persistent headache despite treatment.
Shortness of breath	Suggest positions to make breathing easier .	If severe shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, phone 111.
Rash	Determine characteristics of rash and treat accordingly Antihistamines for itch. Emollients for dry skin.	At any time the rash is non-blanching or the patient is unwell, in case there is another diagnosis, e.g. meningitis, measles. Onset in a child after day 14 of illness, and the child is unwell.
Non-bacterial Conjunctivitis	Sterile saline drops	If in a child who is also unwell with rash. Vision affected, pain in the eye.
Chilblain-like lesions “COVID toes”	Keep affected region warm. Will usually resolve within about 2 weeks. Using hydrocortisone	Medical assessment in a child, if associated with other symptoms such as rash and the child is unwell.

	cream up to 3 times a day may help with redness, swelling, itch, and pain.	
Dizziness/light-headedness or fainting	Seek urgent medical assessment, and if associated with vomiting or diarrhoea, focus on oral hydration while awaiting assessment.	Phone 111 for an ambulance if associated with chest pain or palpitations or any suggestion of a seizure, unconsciousness longer than 30 seconds, or persisting drowsiness.
**Funded via Medication Management Consult pathway		

The following medicines are funded via this pathway:

- Paracetamol:

Is the recommended first-line for symptomatic relief in COVID-19. It treats symptoms but does not improve clinical outcomes.

Dose recommendations are:

- Adults over 50kg 1g every 4-6 hours; maximum of 4g daily
- Adults under 50kg: 15mg/kg every 4-6 hours; maximum of 3g daily
- Paediatric 33-50kg: 15mg/kg every 4-6 hours; maximum of 3g daily
- Paediatric 10-33kg: 15mg/kg every 4-6 hours; maximum of 2g daily
- Paediatric under 10kg: 10mg/kg every 4-6 hours; maximum of 30mg/kg daily

Points to consider:

- Ensure patient is not taking any other paracetamol containing medicines.
- Do not provide a combination of strengths of liquid to one household.

How to dispense and claim:

- **Maximum quantities to be supplied are: tablets: 50 and/or liquid: 200mL**
- Dispense NSS, adjust the price to \$5.
- Ensure legislation regarding labelling is adhered to.
- Ensure that if liquid is provided that patient has a measure or provide one.
- Claim for dispensing via Prescription Co-payment reimbursement.

- Oral rehydration supplements:

Dose recommendations are:

- Given according to fluid and electrolyte loss usually 200-400ml after every loose motion

How to dispense and claim:

- **Maximum quantities to be supplied are: Electral®: 20 and/or Pedialyte®: 1000mL**
- Dispense NSS, adjust the price to \$5.
- Ensure legislation regarding labelling is adhered to.
- Claim for dispensing via Prescription Co-payment reimbursement.

Other medicines, not funded via this pathway, which may be considered:

- Ibuprofen or other NSAIDs
 - Avoid in dehydration.
 - Assess for risk of acute kidney injury (See Operational guide SADMANS-DOG).
 - Assess for risk of medication interactions.
 - Use the lowest necessary dose for the shortest necessary time.
- Saline drops
- Cold and flu over-the-counter medications
 - Ensure patient is not taking any other paracetamol containing medicines.

5. Deliver medication to the patient

Patients are encouraged to ask non-isolating support people to visit the pharmacy and pick up their medications. Where this is not possible the pharmacy can use their usual delivery service (or a courier service or taxi, funded by the pharmacy) and claim a Medication Delivery fee at one claim per day per person.

Tools available:

- [ISBAR communication framework between health care workers](#)
- [Paracetamol dose calculator](#)
- [Patient fact sheet: COVID-19 Seeking medical help – when and how](#)
- [COVID-19 health and symptom diaries](#)
- [AHANZ telehealth practice in New Zealand \(see pg. 3 and 4\)](#)
- [Positions to make breathing easier](#)

References:

[Medicines and COVID-19 | Christchurch Medicines Information Service](#)

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