COVID-19: Updated Information for Community Pharmacists

Key Points

- People with flu-like symptoms, such as those seen with COVID-19, will often seek advice from their pharmacist.
- Please consider asking these people whether they have recently travelled to a country that is considered to pose a risk of COVID-19 transmission (see below), or whether they have been in contact with people confirmed to have COVID-19.
- If the answer is YES, please ask them to put on a surgical mask and present to their GP. If they need urgent medical attention, they should be referred to The Canberra Hospital Emergency Department.
- P2 or N95 masks do not need to be worn by the patient or the pharmacist taking travel and symptom history.

What is the issue?

There is an outbreak of disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus that is called ‘COVID-19’. The outbreak started in Hubei Province, China. Cases have been detected across mainland China and in other countries, including Australia.

Who is at risk?

People with flu-like symptoms, such as those seen with COVID-19, will often seek advice from their pharmacist.

Consider COVID-19 in people who fit the following criteria:

- Travel to a country considered to pose a risk of COVID-19 transmission in the 14 days before the onset of illness.

  OR

- Close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the 14 days before illness onset.

The list of countries considered to pose a risk of COVID-19 transmission is being regularly reviewed and updated. Please refer to the Department of Health website for the current list of countries.

What actions do I take for a patient that meets these criteria?

- Ask the patient to wear a surgical mask and request they avoid contact with others.
- Ask your patient to present to their GP. The patient should call ahead to their GP and tell them about their symptoms and travel history.
• If they need urgent medical attention, they should be referred to the Canberra Hospital Emergency Department. Please call ahead to the Emergency Department and/or inform paramedics about the patient’s travel history and symptoms.

• P2 or N95 masks do not need to be worn by the patient or the pharmacist taking a travel and symptom history.

• For further information, refer to the ACT Health website.

• For additional queries, please contact the Communicable Disease Control (CDC) at ACT Health by calling (02) 5124 9213 during business hours or paging (02) 9962 4155 after hours.

More information


Dr Vanessa Johnston

For Dr Kerryn Coleman
ACT Chief Health Officer

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