

Home delivery of medicines by public servants and volunteers during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Delivering Medicines

During the current public health emergency, there will be a greatly increased need for medicines to be delivered to patients, particularly the more vulnerable members of our communities who are cocooning at home. While some pharmacies routinely provide delivery services, it will be a new development for others to be involved with Covid-19 delivery services which will be provided by staff of public bodies, local authorities, An Post, An Garda Síochána and/or voluntary organisations or groups.

Role of Volunteers

The assistance of public servants and volunteers in delivering essential services to vulnerable members of the population is a hugely important part of the response to the Covid-19 pandemic. This assistance is vitally important in ensuring vulnerable patients can continue to access their medicines. Delivering medicines places particular responsibilities on volunteers, including the need to:

- maintain patient confidentiality,
- adhere to public health guidance, and
- maintain the security and safety of the medicines (for example, ensuring that medicines needing refrigeration are out of the fridge for as short a time as possible).

This document is intended to assist volunteers who are taking up this important role on behalf of their communities.

Role of Pharmacies

In each pharmacy the supervising pharmacist is responsible for ensuring that the delivery of medicines to patients is carried out in a safe, organised and secure manner. Pharmacies having good processes and procedures in place will be critical in supporting patients who are cocooning at home and whose medicines are being delivered by third parties. This document is intended to provide practical advice and support on what pharmacies should do to ensure the safe delivery of medicines during the pandemic, whether this is done by pharmacy staff, volunteers, members of An Garda Síochána or others.

Format of this Guidance

This guidance is divided into three sections:

- **Section 1 outlines the procedure to be followed by volunteers** when delivering medicines to vulnerable patients.
- **Section 2 details the procedure to be followed by pharmacies** when delivering medicines to vulnerable patients.

- **Section 3 contains guidance for patients receiving medicines at home during the Covid-19 pandemic.**

Section 1

Procedure to be followed by volunteers when delivering medicines by arrangement to vulnerable or isolated patients during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

1. In each pharmacy the supervising pharmacist has overall responsibility to ensure appropriate procedures are in place to ensure the safe supply and delivery of medicines.
2. A confidentiality agreement should be signed between the pharmacist and the volunteer.
3. The pharmacist will be in contact with the patient to ensure that the patient or their carer has the information they need for the proper use, storage and disposal of the medicines concerned. Volunteers will not be expected to give this type of information as part of the delivery service – where a patient has a query, they should contact the pharmacy – see section 2 point 3, below.
4. The pharmacy will give the patient an approximate time for delivery and ensure that someone is at home to receive delivery. The patient will be given the name of a contact person and telephone number for the pharmacy should any issues or queries with their medicines arise.
5. The medicines will be placed in a sealed bag labelled with the patient name and address and this bag should ideally be placed in a larger bag, for example, a carrier bag labelled with patient's name, address, Eircode (<https://www.eircode.ie/>) and contact phone number.
6. The pharmacy will ensure that they maintain a record of the delivery in the pharmacy and a copy of this delivery record will be given to the volunteer. The delivery record sheet /or email should have an extra column for the volunteer to fill in once delivery is made and to record any notes that might be necessary.
7. The pharmacy will contact the volunteer by telephone and arrange a suitable time for the volunteer to collect the medicines from the pharmacy and to receive instructions from the pharmacist.
8. Medicines should be delivered **immediately** to the patient once collected. If the volunteer is making several deliveries, they will be given guidance to prioritise those deliveries containing medicines that need refrigeration.
9. Upon arrival at the patient's home, the volunteer should phone the patient and ask them for their name and address. Once the volunteer is sure that they are delivering to the correct person at the correct address, they should inform the patient that the prescription package is on the doorstep of the patient's home.
10. The volunteer should move back a distance of 2m from the patient's door.



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11. The patient should check the medicines delivery and confirm to the volunteer that they are the intended recipient.
12. In the eventuality of the door going unanswered and the volunteer being unable to make contact by phone, the medicine must be returned to the pharmacy without delay.
13. The volunteer will confirm safe delivery has been made by returning the delivery sheet/or emailing the pharmacy/or texting to the pharmacy or confirming in another way as agreed with the pharmacy.

Checklist for the person carrying out the delivery

- Have you read and understood the procedure for carrying out deliveries of medicines and been given the opportunity to ask any questions?
- Has the pharmacist identified any deliveries that contain medicines that require refrigeration and therefore need to be prioritised?
- Are you satisfied that you can find each of the addresses to which medicines are to be delivered?
- On arrival at the patient's house, have you phoned the patient and confirmed who you are speaking with and the address?
- Once sure of the patient's identity, have you informed them that their delivery is outside?
- Before the patient answers the door, are you standing 2 metres back from the patient's door?
- Have you confirmed with the patient a second time that the correct medicines have been delivered to the correct person?
- Have you made a record of all successful deliveries, e.g. via text or email to the pharmacy, or paper record as required in the pharmacy procedure?
- Have you returned any undelivered medicine to the pharmacy?

PSI – The Pharmacy Regulator and the HSE thank all volunteers and other people making medicine deliveries in these difficult times. We applaud your commitment and community spirit.

Section 2

Procedure to be followed by pharmacists when delivering medicines by arrangement to vulnerable or isolated patients during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The [PSI Delivery Guidance on the Delivery of Medicines](#) should be used by pharmacies as the essential reference on which to put in place a safe medicine delivery service at this time. Whatever method of arranged delivery is used, it must be stressed that the pharmacist retains professional responsibility for the delivery service and that pharmacists must ensure they take a careful and organised approach, which is consistent with PSI Guidance and the current national public health advice.

When supplying medicines to patients at this time, you should carefully consider the following points, in conjunction with the [PSI Delivery Guidance](#):

1. Superintendent and supervising pharmacist(s) have overall responsibility for ensuring that the system used is suitable having regard to the nature of the medicine concerned and the integrity of the supply chain through which the medicines are to be delivered.
2. The pharmacist continues to be responsible for the therapeutic review of prescription medicines, the provision of any required patient counselling and for ensuring that patient care continues to be provided to the usual and expected standard. Use of technology (telephone, skype, etc.) can be very helpful in these times to assist in the safe supply of medicines and the provision of advice to patients at a distance.
3. Clear procedures must be in place to ensure that the right medicine gets to the right patient. **Pharmacists should be particularly aware of the need to give clear information and support to volunteers so that the volunteers can carry out their vital role safely and effectively.**
4. Policies, procedures and good record keeping requirements must be adhered to when providing a delivery service - further detail on this is available in the PSI Delivery Guidance
5. The following steps should be followed to ensure the safety of patients and delivery persons and volunteers:
 - ✓ The identification of the person undertaking the delivery should be verified.
 - ✓ There should be a signed confidentiality agreement between the pharmacist and the volunteer.
 - ✓ A record must be kept of what medicines are being delivered by each delivery person and to whom.
 - ✓ Volunteers must be advised to deliver medicines immediately to the patient once collected from the pharmacy. Deliveries containing medicines that require refrigeration should be identified to the volunteer and prioritised for delivery.
 - ✓ Extra care should be taken where one person is responsible for multiple deliveries in order to avoid mix-ups. Deliveries should be in sealed bags, labelled with the



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patient's name and address, including Eircode (<https://www.eircode.ie/>) and phone number. Where the patient does not know their Eircode, the pharmacy must use the Eircode finder to ensure that this vital information is provided to the volunteer.

- ✓ The bag or label should include a contact in the pharmacy to phone if the patient has a query or issue with their medicines after delivery.
- ✓ Upon arrival at a patient's home, the patient should be phoned by the person doing the delivery and informed that their delivery is outside.
- ✓ The delivery person must move back a distance of 2 metres from the patient's door.
- ✓ Confirmation should be sought from the patient that the correct medicines have been delivered to the correct person.
- ✓ In the eventuality of the door going unanswered and/or the delivery person being unable to make contact with the patient by phone, the medicines should be returned to the pharmacy without delay and that same day.
- ✓ The person making the delivery should be able to record a successful delivery via text or email to the pharmacy, or paper record as required in the pharmacy procedure.

Checklist for the Pharmacist

- Has the identity of the person undertaking the delivery been verified?
- Is there a signed confidentiality agreement between the pharmacist and the volunteer?
- Has the delivery person read the procedure for carrying out deliveries of medicines and have you confirmed their understanding?
- Are all deliveries in sealed bags, labelled with the patient's name and address, including Eircode and phone number?
- Has the delivery person confirmed that they can find each address?
- Does the bag or label include a contact in the pharmacy to phone if the patient has a query or issue about their medicines after delivery?
- Has a record been made of what medicines are being delivered by each delivery person?
- Has the patient been contacted to provide any necessary counselling and to alert them to when the delivery should be expected?

PSI – The Pharmacy Regulator and the HSE thank all pharmacists and pharmacy teams for your ongoing work in supporting patients with their medicines in these difficult times. We applaud your professionalism and commitment to caring for our communities.

Section 3 Guidance for patients ordering and receiving medicines

1. Please telephone your pharmacy to order and discuss your medicines.
2. Please be at home to take in your delivery.
3. The delivery person will telephone you when they arrive at your address.
4. The delivery person will ask you on the phone to confirm your name and address. This is to help ensure that the right medicines are delivered to the right person.
5. Go to your door to collect your medications. Make sure to wear gloves to take in your medications.
6. When you open your door, the delivery person will be standing 2 metres (6 feet) back from your door and the medicines will be on your doorstep.
7. The delivery person will ask you again to confirm your name and address.
8. When you take your medicines inside, remove the items from the bag and put the bag in the bin.
9. Wash your hands after removing your gloves.
10. Please check your medicines after receiving them.
11. If there are any problems with your delivery or if you have any questions about your medicines, make sure to contact your pharmacy by telephone.
12. A trusted relative, carer or friend may help you order and take in your medicines if you need assistance with the above steps.

PSI – The Pharmacy Regulator and the HSE assure you and all patients of our ongoing support as we all work to see Ireland through this current crisis.

ALONE is encouraging older people who need advice or support to call their support line, 0818 222 024 from 8am-8pm, seven days a week. This service is available to all older people. The support line is to complement the clinical advice and information being provided by the HSE on its website and helpline. Older people who are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 are advised to call their GP.