

Frequently Asked Questions

Access to Palliative Care Drugs in Primary Care during COVID-19 A Guide for prescribers and healthcare colleagues

- Access Dorset Formulary [\[Link\]](#)
- Local Guidance - Covid-19 Supporting people in the last weeks of life guidance [\[Link\]](#)
- NICE COVID-19 Rapid Response Guidelines: managing symptoms (including at end of life) in the community NG163 [\[Link\]](#)
- Wessex Palliative Care Handbook 2019 [\[Link\]](#)
- Novel coronavirus (COVID-19) standard operating procedure: Running a medicines re-use scheme in a care home or hospice setting SOP [\[link\]](#)

Do I need to set up grab bags or stock supplies in my local Hot Hubs and/or care homes?

- **NO - National advice** is not to hold stockpiles of medicines including palliative care medicines in any setting, and to use EPS prescriptions from pharmacies as routine.
- Advanced prescribing or stockpiling places additional risk on the supply chain. In addition, it removes stock from wholesalers and pharmacies and prevents the opportunity of redirecting distribution to areas of need if the pandemic situation changes.

How should I prescribe palliative care medicines?

- Advanced care planning remains a priority for older people, people who are frail or have other serious conditions. See RCGP Joint statement on advance care planning [\[Link\]](#)
- If advanced planning isn't possible and/or the case is now urgent an **EPS acute prescription** should be generated by the prescriber and sent to the patients **nominated** community pharmacy.
 - If prescribers have seen the patient an EPS token(s) must be provided.
 - If remotely prescribed, ideally the barcode(s) should be texted to the patient

(Without these, prescriptions are not easily identified on the spine)

How do carers/patient representatives access dispensing of palliative care drug prescriptions across Dorset?

- **Option 1 – During regular opening hours: Community Pharmacies** – ALL community pharmacies are able to supply palliative care medicines. The patient's regular, nominated pharmacy should be the first port of call for any prescription requirements. This maintains the supply chain across Dorset. It is advisable to discuss with the patient's nominated pharmacy the availability of medicines and adjust prescribing accordingly.
- **Option 2 – During extended opening hours: Locally Commissioned Palliative Care Pharmacies** – In addition to all community pharmacies, Dorset CCG has commissioned a service with 15 community pharmacies to ensure enhanced access to palliative care medicines. These pharmacies offer weekend access and enhanced opening hours (NOT On Call). Each of the 15 pharmacies holds an enhanced stock supply of a specific range of palliative medicines.
 - Locally Commissioned Palliative Care Community Pharmacies [\[Link\]](#)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Community Pharmacy Palliative Care Drugs List [Link] It remains advisable to discuss the availability of medicines with the pharmacy and adjust prescribing accordingly. ● Option 3: For care homes and hospices, in exceptional circumstances, apply the Novel coronavirus (COVID-19) standard operating procedure: Running a medicines re-use scheme in a care home or hospice setting SOP as agreed locally within the PCN
Collection/Delivery of prescriptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● An EPS acute prescription should be generated by the prescriber and sent to the patient's nominated community pharmacy. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If prescribers have seen the patient an EPS token must be provided. ○ If remotely prescribed, ideally the barcode should be texted to the patient or their carer/representative (as agreed with the patient) ○ Without either of these prescriptions are not easily identified on the spine ● Collection/Delivery of Prescription: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Collection of the palliative prescription by a representative or carer remains the best option. ○ Patients/Carers who are unable to identify a representative to collect on their behalf can be supported to find a volunteer to collect the prescription on their behalf by contacting either the <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BCP helpline on 0300 123 7052 or ▪ Dorset helpline on 01305 221 000 ○ Shielded patients can be supported by deliveries of medicines from their pharmacy through the Pandemic Delivery Service. The shielded patients carer/representative can phone the community pharmacy directly to make arrangements. Community Pharmacies can identify shielded patients via the Summary Care Record. Practices have been asked to share names on the shielded list in the interests of the patient, without sharing clinical detail as this will further facilitate deliveries of dispensed medicines where required.
Queues at Community Pharmacies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Just as at supermarkets there may be a need to queue at the community pharmacy. Community pharmacies are no longer reporting significant queues on their premises. A short wait might be required as many pharmacies are enacting their social distancing and continuity plans. Policies such as 'One in : One out' may apply.
Fast-tracking prescription collection for care homes or nursing teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Community pharmacies have been asked to assist fellow healthcare workers by allowing them to bypass the usual queue when collecting medicines. ● Healthcare workers are encouraged to communicate and liaise with their local pharmacies directly to identify local arrangements.

Contact details

The medicines management team can be contacted at 01305 213548 or via the dedicated queries inbox at: medicine.question@dorsetccg.nhs.uk.

**** Disclaimer ****. *This is rapid impact summary contains links to interim guidance developed to respond to emerging prescribing and medicines management issues during the COVID-19 pandemic. Best efforts have been made to consult with the relevant specialities before guidance is published. In the current climate, guidance is subject to rapid change, often on a daily basis. Please consider this when utilising this guidance. We ask practices only to adopt National Guidance from NHS England & Improvement, NICE, relevant professional bodies or from Dorset CCG.*