

Coronavirus: how to access the medicines you and your family need

23 March 2020, by Nial Wheate and Andrew Bartlett



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Panic buying of toilet paper, no meat or soap on [supermarket shelves](#), and now an [apparent run](#) on medicines such as asthma puffers and children's paracetamol.

The COVID-19 pandemic is affecting us in ways we've never had to deal with before. So Australia [has announced](#) measures to help people access their medicines.

These include limiting the number of medications people can buy, dispensing only a month's worth of supply at a time, and placing some behind the counter.

And, of course, pharmacies are essential services so they will remain open during the forthcoming shutdown period.

There are also ways people who are self-isolating or at risk can access their medicines, from using apps, to government-funded free home delivery.

Here are some of your options for the weeks and months ahead.

Purchase limits on essential medicines

There are now [purchase limits](#) on certain medicines.

Customers in pharmacies are [now limited](#) to one of the following per person (or one month's supply, if relevant):

- asthma puffers (Ventolin) and other medicines used for the treatment of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- paracetamol
- Epipen, to manage severe allergic reactions
- some heart medicines, such as glyceryl trinitrate
- some diabetes medicines, including insulin
- some anti-epileptic medicines.

Purchasing limits have also been placed on many other prescriptions.

Pharmacists have been directed to only dispense [one month's supply](#) for more than 50 different medicines used to treat a range of conditions, including: cancer, Parkinson's, chronic pain, blood pressure, and contraceptives.

Children's paracetamol will now be kept [behind the counter](#).

What to do if you can't get to your local pharmacy

If you have been directed to self-isolate or if it's risky for you to shop at a [pharmacy](#), there are still options.

If you are in isolation, are over the age of 70, of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, or have a compromised immune systems or chronic health condition, [you may be eligible](#) for a free service to deliver medicines to your home.

This scheme only covers the costs of delivery for [Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme \(PBS\)](#) medicines. The scheme does not include everyday products

like hand sanitiser or regular over-the-counter medicines.

If you're not eligible for the home medicines service, one way to get your prescription and non-prescription medicines delivered to your home is via an app like [mymedkit](#).

This Australian-based company allows you to take a photo of your prescription and upload it into the app, where the script is then filled by your local pharmacy.

You can choose what day and time you want it delivered so you can be there when it arrives. And if you don't need prescription medicines, they can also deliver other products like vitamins, skincare creams, first aid kits, baby wipes and nappies.

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