



Distribution of PPE through PHNs: Access to the National Medical Stockpile for pharmacists providing COVID-19 vaccinations.

On 29 October 2021, the Australian Government announced the \$180 million **Living with COVID-19 Primary Care Package** to strengthen and support the health system as high vaccination levels allow Australia to open up. To further support ongoing vaccinations within pharmacies, the Australian Government is making additional Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) available to pharmacists who are administering COVID-19 vaccinations and booster doses through to 31 March 2022.

This information will provide guidance on pharmacist eligibility and the steps that need to be taken to request access to PPE from the National Medical Stockpile (NMS) through Primary Health Networks (PHNs).

What has changed?

Under the existing PPE supply arrangements, community pharmacy can only access surgical masks from the NMS where there is no local supply available commercially or from a State or Territory government scheme, and if:

- their staff are required to be in direct contact with patients/clients at less than 1.5 metres, and there may be community transmission of COVID-19 in their area.
- they have significant contact with people presenting with fever or respiratory symptoms (irrespective of level of community transmission of COVID-19).

While this arrangement continues, the expanded program provides access to PPE pharmacy bundles that are intended to support approximately 4 weeks of COVID-19 vaccinations per pharmacist, per order.

Eligibility to access PPE pharmacy bundles

Only pharmacists who are administering COVID-19 vaccinations are eligible to request access to a PPE pharmacy bundle from the NMS.

What can be ordered under this PPE pharmacy bundle arrangement

PPE pharmacy bundles contain P2/N95 respirators and either a goggle or face shield.

One (1) PPE pharmacy bundle can be ordered per pharmacist who is administering COVID-19 vaccinations or booster doses. The initial PPE pharmacy bundle will support immunizing pharmacists who are providing COVID-19 vaccinations and booster doses for up to 4 weeks. The bundle provides access to 90 P2/N95 respirators per pharmacist and 1 goggle or face shield per pharmacy, after which monthly orders of only the P2/N95 respirators can be made up to 31 March 2022.

Table 1: PPE pharmacy bundle

Product Type	PPE pharmacy bundle contents	Pharmacists providing COVID-19 vaccinations per clinic
P2/N95 respirators	90 units (1 box)	✓
Product Type	One off distribution per Community pharmacy	Community pharmacy providing COVID-19 vaccinations
Goggles / face shields	1 units	✓

P2/N95 respirators

P2/N95 respirators should be replaced after 4 hours of continuous use but can be extended based on infection control assessment at a workplace level in the face of short supply.

For further information regarding P2/N95 respirators can be found [here](#).

Eye protection (goggle/face shield)

Fact sheets and videos outlining the use and cleaning of protective eyewear can be found [here](#).

What are the obligations of pharmacists?

Pharmacists applying for the PPE pharmacy bundle through the NMS will be required to:

- provide considered and reasonable requests for stock (via their PHN) based on the numbers of clinical staff providing vaccination and the volumes of vaccinations delivered;
- certify (by agreeing and providing the APHRA number of the relevant pharmacist (trained to provide COVID vaccinations), for whom the PPE is sought as part of the ordering process) and they are not receiving free PPE from other sources. They will need to ensure they, or their pharmacy, are not stockpiling or accessing multiple sources of free PPE;
- not on sell any products provided by the Commonwealth under this arrangement; and
- use the PPE for its intended purpose i.e. for the support of administering COVID-19 vaccinations and booster doses.

Compliance checks and audits of distributed PPE volumes may be undertaken using Australian Immunisation Register data. Anyone found to be breaching these obligations may be charged full cost for all stock and no further PPE provisions will be made.

What are PHN obligations?

PHNs will be expected to communicate their process for ordering and distributing stock with the pharmacists in their region. PPE pharmacy bundles may need to be re-configured/ assembled at the PHN, with delivery to community pharmacy through existing arrangements in place with the local PHN. The assembly and distribution of the PPE pharmacy bundles will need to be coordinated by the local PHN until a national distributor is appointed early in 2022. After this time, the PHNs will remain only as the central NMS ordering point for health professionals.

More information

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the 'Distribution of masks through PHNs – Version 4 (05/08/2020).

For more information, please refer to:

- the Department of Health "A Practical Guide to Providing Care in the Home for COVID-19 Positive Clients" **[Distributed to PHNs 23 Nov]**
- [Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare \(2021\)](#)
- [The Communicable Diseases Network Australian \(CDNA\) series of National Guidelines](#)
- [The Infection Control Expert Group \(ICEG\) guidance on the use of PPE for health workers in the context of COVID-19](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) resources for health professionals](#)
- [The World Health Organization \(WHO\) PPE guidelines](#)

For the latest advice, information and resources, go to www.health.gov.au