

Friday, 24 July 2020

Reusable face masks available for vulnerable Victorians in pharmacies

The Victorian Government has announced it will be distributing 2.1 million reusable face masks to vulnerable Victorians, Aboriginal Victorians and government health workforces who deliver health services.

Victorians who meet the eligibility are able to collect masks from a number of local government and community health services including community pharmacies.

Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) Victoria Branch President John Jackson welcomed the announcement and said PSA supported the supply of masks to vulnerable Victorians through community pharmacies as part of the public health program.

“Community pharmacies are an easily accessible location for members of the public to access masks and PSA supports this initiative by the Victorian Government,” he said.

“Pharmacists can make a judgement themselves on the resourcing they have available to participate.

“It is important that people with symptoms of COVID-19 do not present to the pharmacy to collect a mask and that they send someone else to do so.”

Following feedback from members, PSA has called on the Victorian Government to ask members of the community not to enter a community pharmacy while displaying any symptoms or waiting for results from a COVID-19 test.

Analysis of Victorians diagnosed with COVID-19 in the last two weeks have shown that 90 per cent of people did not self-isolate between getting COVID-19 symptoms and getting tested and 53 per cent did not self-isolate after being tested while awaiting results.

Mr Jackson said it is critical that those who are self-isolating or in quarantine do not present at a pharmacy and put pharmacists, pharmacy staff and other members of the community at risk.

“We have listened to our members and advocated on their behalf and I call on the government to pass these concerns on to all Victorians,” he said.

“Our members have told us that people who are self-isolated are confused as to whether they are to go to a pharmacy to access health care while in self-isolation and inconsistent information provided to people undergoing testing regarding requirements to self-isolate.

“To stop community transition and to protect the health of pharmacists and pharmacy staff, if members of the community have been tested or are in self-isolation do not go out into the public.”

Mr Jackson also said patients self-isolating or displaying symptoms of COVID-19 who need essential medicines should contact their pharmacy to discuss contactless options.

“There are a number of ways patients can access essential medicines from a pharmacy including home delivery services or sending friends and family to collect on your behalf,” he said.

The Department of Health and Human Services yesterday released further guidance regarding workplace use of face masks with health care workers required to wear a level 1 or type 1 disposable surgical mask in public-facing areas.

More information on who is eligible and how to order face masks can be found here:

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/reusable-face-masks-covid-19>.

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