

A message from community pharmacy

To our patients and customers,

Please be patient, courteous and safe when visiting your local pharmacy.

All healthcare workers, including the UK's 14,000 pharmacy teams, are doing everything they can to help the country through this tough winter period.

Sadly, the pressures of the Covid-19 pandemic, and shortages of lateral flow tests in particular, have sometimes spilled over into verbal abuse of pharmacy staff.

We want to remind all pharmacy patients and customers to be patient with pharmacy staff, who are doing their utmost to support you at this very difficult time; treat them with courtesy, as you yourself would wish to be treated.

Pharmacies have distributed nearly 300 million lateral flow kits, but the current supply into pharmacies is not enough to meet demand. They are doing everything they can but are not in control of the national supply chain.

We have told the government that they should either guarantee enough stock, or have an honest conversation with the public about prioritising essential workers. It is unfair, in our view, for pharmacists to be put in a position of rationing stock.

A word about the 16 digit 'Collect Code' that people are asked to present to pharmacy staff when requesting a test kit: this is not a guarantee that a particular pack will be waiting for you or that indeed the pharmacy will have any packs at all. In fact its purpose is to monitor pharmacy distribution. We would rather it was not required, but that is the system we currently have to work with.

Alongside their day job of providing your medicines, health advice and a range of NHS services, pharmacies have gone above and beyond in their efforts to protect the population during this pandemic, including delivering nearly 17 million covid jabs. They have worked incredibly hard with little respite for months and deserve to feel safe at work.

Please help us to continue to do our vital work on the health service frontline, in these ways:

- **Do not enter a pharmacy if you suspect you may be infected – this puts pharmacy staff and other patients and customers at risk.**
- **Wear masks unless you are exempt - with the Omicron variant appearing to be more transmissible, this message is more important than ever before if health workers and the services they deliver are to be protected.**
- **If you take medicines for a long-term medical condition, please order your repeat medication in plenty of time before your current supply runs out, to avoid unnecessary delays.**
- **Treat pharmacy staff with courtesy, as you yourself would wish to be treated. There must be zero tolerance of abuse in any circumstances.**