



Date: March 24, 2020  
Memo To: Physicians, Nursing and Pharmacy  
From: Pharmacy Managers  
**RE: COVID-19 and Reduction of Medication Waste**

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### **Situation:**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Island Health will likely experience medication shortages. There is disruption in the global supply chain for a wide variety of medications, including those used to treat COVID-19. The risk of shortages will persist until the global supply chain can be stabilized. This issue is being addressed at both federal and provincial levels. Pharmacy is actively monitoring the rapidly evolving situation at Island Health.

**As a reminder, and to mitigate risk within Island Health, supplies of all medications should be conserved whenever possible.**

### **Recommended Actions:**

- Return all intact and unused medications to Pharmacy (or to the return bin in Dispensing Cabinets).
  - Discard medications that have been contaminated or cannot be reused EXCEPT Metered Dose Inhalers, such as Ventolin, Atrovent and Flovent.
- Do not open medication packages or draw up parenteral medications prior to a decision to administer the medication.
- Prepare medications outside of a patient's environment if possible.
- Do not store or transfer medication supplies into a patient's environment unless required.
- Do not modify unit dose packaging by writing on it. The medication must be discarded if this occurs.
- Take measures to protect medication supplies stored in rooms where there is a potential for airborne generating medical procedures (AGMP) on suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients.
  - Options include moving these medication supplies outside of these environments or ensuring medication storage cabinets remain closed until decontamination of the cabinet has been completed.
- Do not send patients home with any medication that can be reused, including Metered Dose Inhalers (MDIs), such as Ventolin, Atrovent and Flovent.
  - Canisters from MDIs may need to be sterilized and re-dispensed if supply runs critically low.

### **Resources:**

- [Island Health COVID-19 web page](#)
- [Pharmacy Drug Shortages web page](#)
- [Medication Related Guidance and Recommendations](#)

**Memo content reviewed by Island Health Infection Control.  
Please contact your site pharmacy if you have any questions or concerns.**