

# Medicines to Be Rationed by Pharmacists to Avoid Drug Shortage

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## FULL TEXT

Pharmacists in the country have decided to ration the sale of medicines to customers in a bid to curb panic buying and stave off a shortage in supplies. To ensure equitable supplies to customers, pharmacies will dispense drugs for only seven days in the case of an acute illness and for 30 days from the prescription date for chronic conditions, according to a decision taken by All India Organisation of Chemists and Druggists (AIOCD). While doorstep delivery of medicines will be made in hotspots and areas where there is total curfew, the quantity for each order will be limited. Pharmacies are asking customers to avoid stockpiling medicines because panic buying during the Covid-19 pandemic leads to a tighter supply of certain drugs. "Since we want to avoid shortages, it is necessary to economise the supply," said one member of the AIOCD, who did not wish to be identified. While some medicines are in higher demand directly because of the Covid-19 outbreak, many customers are stocking up on a larger supply of their regular medication than usual or trying to refill prescriptions earlier than necessary. "Patients have stockpiled even vitamin tablets," said a pharmacist.

Chemists said the unnecessary stockpiling was putting a strain on the system, which has been struggling with shortages of some drugs. "Supplies at the wholesaler's end are being rationed, so we are rationing further. There have been issues in inter-state transport movement due to which many medicines are in the warehouse and since we don't want shortages, we have to ration the supplies," said a member from a chemist association. All medicines, except those requiring prescriptions, can be delivered at a patient's doorstep. The date of the medicine supply will have to be mentioned on all prescriptions, according to a new memorandum drawn up by the AIOCD. Kailash Gupta, president of the All India Chemists' Federation, said they are responding to the increased demand by asking customers to buy only what they need. "We have seen an influx of customers trying to buy for months. The point is to ensure that there is no shortage," he said. Many chemists are also seeing a surge in customers looking to pick up medicines they haven't used in years. "Associations have been working on this system to determine if some medications can be limited to a 30-day supply to preserve the supply chain," said Sandeep Nangia, organising secretary, AIOCD.

## DETAILS

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