

# Making the pharmacy work for you and your clients

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## Merchandising in the pharmacy

We often hear people speaking about merchandising, but what do they mean? Is it just another way of advertising products?

In simple terms, merchandising involves how products are displayed in order to influence consumers to buy those products. In general, the display should be eye-catching, attractive and should communicate the value of buying the product to the consumer.

It goes without saying that cleanliness in the pharmacy is crucial – no dust or old labels on the shelves or the products are permitted because that creates the impression that no one cares.

## Even the layout of the pharmacy is important

If the customer can't find her (or his!) way to the dispensary, or the vitamins, or whatever it is that is needed, the customer will turn around and walk out of the pharmacy. Good merchandising starts with a logical layout and good signage.

Here's a thought: why do you think the dispensary is always at the back of the pharmacy? Mm, when I walk to the back, I'm reminded that I need toothpaste, and that's a good price for shampoo, and I may as well get some vitamins when I pass them!

And if I'm pushing a baby in a pram, I hope the aisles are wide enough so that I can easily pass through them, and the baby can't grab anything off the shelves.

## Stocking the shelves logically

Although your pharmacist or pharmacy owner will have designed the pharmacy layout, the pharmacist's assistant will probably be responsible for maintaining the stock in the dispensary, including displaying products for patient self-care. These include medicines that must be sold under the supervision of the pharmacist, such as schedule 1 and schedule 2 medicines, but may include unscheduled medicines and unrelated products such as nutritional supplements.

As far as the shelves to which customers have direct access are concerned, don't forget that most shoppers are women! So eye-level for them is lower than eye-level for men, and they will not be

able to reach as high up as men can. Some grocery stores make the mistake of stacking goods so high that most women cannot reach the highest shelves – hopefully, pharmacies don't make that mistake too!

It also makes sense to pack related products near each other – like skincare and make-up. And remember that having testers for these products also encourages shoppers to linger and think about the products.

Obviously, if you have a mass display, it's important to make sure that the shelf or shelves remain fully stocked – gaps in the stock will not make a good impression on the customer.

## Seasonal displays

In winter, we automatically think about colds and flu – in the dispensary, we usually arrange the medicines in groups according to the indication and active ingredients. There are other products that consumers may be interested in buying that can be recommended or placed strategically to remind them, such as tissues and vitamins.

We must also remember other products for which the need is likely to increase in winter, such as moisturisers, hand cream and lip balm.

Summer brings different challenges. In particular, our lovely sunshine can become a problem if we don't protect our skin from its dangers. This provides an opportunity for the creative assistant to build an attractive display to remind customers in the pharmacy of the need to protect themselves from the sun.

Summer is also often the time for diarrhoea and hayfever, so these products, even if stocked in the dispensary, should be highly visible to the consumer. Insect repellents and sunglasses should also be in prominent positions.

## Other complementary sales

When dispensing prescriptions, the pharmacist will be aware of medication that can deplete nutrients, which may be sold as supplements. Some of them are well known, e.g., some older antibiotics are supplemented with probiotics and B vitamins.

Think about patients who have diabetes – there are so many additional items that are needed in diabetes management. These include glucose meters and test strips. Some patients will require insulin syringes and pen needles. Sugar-free candies, orthopaedic footwear and compression socks can also make useful ancillary products.

### The bottom line

It's worth making your customers' shopping experience a fulfilling and easy experience – you need their support to continue in business.

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