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The Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) has said that the Omicron wave is placing the country's community pharmacies under significant pressure. This is resulting in some pharmacies being required to reduce hours or close for certain days as they struggle to cope with staff shortages.

The IPU has said that pharmacies will continue to play a very active role in the vaccination programme. However, people are requested to plan ahead and wherever possible order required medications, such as repeat prescriptions, well in advance. Doing so will alleviate the pressures on pharmacies while ensuring no interruption in medicine supply.

Speaking about the challenges currently being faced by pharmacies, Darragh O'Loughlin, Secretary General of the IPU said: "Pharmacies are experiencing significant pressures due to the reduced availability of staff who have COVID-19 or may be unwell with other routine illnesses or are close contacts of people with COVID-19. This is exacerbating a pre-existing shortage of pharmacists and pharmacy staff that has grown more acute in recent years.

"These staff shortages come at a time when the demands on pharmacies have increased significantly. Each pharmacy will strive to maintain services to patients and the public, but

reduced hours and temporary closures cannot be ruled out.

“We would ask all members of the public to be patient when visiting their pharmacy and understand certain services may take longer than usual. Where possible, ordering repeat medications in advance would be a great assistance to your pharmacist, while also ensuring you receive your medications without undue delays.”