



## Brisbane South PHN update, 18 March 2020: COVID-19

### Highlights

- Information in this update reflects the Queensland Health COVID-19 [Public Health Alert No. 5 / 17 March 2020](#)
- New or changed information (from the previous Brisbane South PHN update) is highlighted in orange

### Situation update

- The Australian Government's latest [Update on Coronavirus Measures](#) was made on 18 March 2020
- Effective from midnight 15 March 2020, all international arrivals to Australia are required to self-isolate for 14 days.
- A [national campaign](#) has launched to inform all Australians about the coronavirus (COVID-19).
- The World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared COVID-19 a pandemic, [click here](#) for the media briefing
- In December 2019, an outbreak of a novel (new) coronavirus (COVID-19), began in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. The latest information indicates evidence of human-to-human transmission. Symptoms include fever, difficulty breathing, non-specific upper respiratory tract infection symptoms such as cough and sore throat and chest radiographs showing bilateral pneumonic infiltrations. No vaccine or specific treatment is currently available.

### Clinical updates

Fever clinics in the Brisbane South PHN region (as at 11 March 2020) are:

Logan Hospital	Armstrong Rd &, Loganlea Rd	Meadowbrook	4131	Designated Area in ED	10:00 - 18:00 hrs
PAH	199 Ipswich Road	Woolloongabba	4102	Short Stay Unit	24 hrs, 7 days
Redlands	Weippin St	Cleveland	4163	Short Stay Unit	24 hrs, 7 days
QEII	Troughton Rd & Kessels Rd	Coopers Plains	4108	Area beside ED	12:00 – 20:30 hrs
Mater	Raymond Terrace	South Brisbane	4101	Mater's Public ED, former 'Fast-Track' area	24 hrs, 7 days

### Testing recommendations

- There is a world-wide shortage of pathology consumables and the following testing advice is in place.
- COVID-19 testing should only occur if a person meets one of the following criteria:
  - has fever OR acute respiratory symptoms; AND  
travelled overseas within the previous 14 days, OR had recent close contact (previous 14 days) with a confirmed case of COVID-19,  
OR
  - has severe community-acquired pneumonia requiring admission with no other identifiable cause,  
OR
  - is a healthcare worker with direct patient contact has a fever ( $\geq 37.5$ ) AND an acute respiratory infection (shortness of breath, cough and/or sore throat)
- Patients who present with minor upper respiratory illness who do not meet the above criteria, should NOT be tested for COVID-19.
- Health care workers with minor upper respiratory symptoms who do not meet the criteria for testing, should remain at home until their symptoms resolve, at which point they can return to work.

- A full respiratory virus panel test should only be requested in assessment of vulnerable immunocompromised patients.
  - If a patient is in self-quarantine and remains well, there is no benefit in testing. A negative test result will not shorten the quarantine period as the test will remain negative until the person develops infection. This may take up to 14 days.
  - If the treating clinician has a strong index of suspicion of COVID-19 and if a positive case would have significant public health implications (e.g. an index case in a RCF) then testing outside the case definition may be considered.
- Immediately contact **Metro South Public Health Unit 07 3156 4000** if you encounter a suspected case and for further guidance regarding next steps and specimen collection. For a list of approved centres for collection of specimens for COVID-19 virus testing please refer to ([Mater](#), [QML](#) or [SNP](#)).
  - People who undergo testing should be managed as suspect cases and isolated until the results of testing are known. A cautious approach to infection control is recommended, including standard, contact and airborne precautions, and asking people suspected of having the infection to wear a surgical mask.
  - A number of people in the community have been issued quarantine orders and are self-isolating in their homes for the mandatory 14-day period, with support from Red Cross and Queensland Health.

#### Queensland Health Clinical Senate and Clinical Networks update about PPE

In response to low levels of PPE, the QH Clinical Senate and Clinical Networks have issued the following recommendations (17 March 2020).

We ask that every single clinician considers the following actions to help preserve existing stocks of PPE for frontline responders:

- immediately limit the number of people involved in all clinical procedures to essential operators only.
- carefully consider who is required in a room during all clinical procedures to limit the use of PPE. This will depend on the specific procedure and infection control requirements but should be kept to the absolute minimum.
- with specific reference to fever clinics, urgent consideration of streamlining processes to limit the need to change PPE should take place. These will need to be developed locally – we are aware that MNHHS and DDHHS have commenced implementing this process.

We are in an unprecedented situation. What we would do in optimal circumstances is no longer sustainable or fit for purpose. We are all required to think innovatively as we respond to this challenge.

Re-use of PPE in low risk situations for instance may be a better alternative than no PPE at all, allowing us to conserve PPE stocks to respond appropriately to known risk situations. Remember, simple soap and water effectively and efficiently kills this virus and in most circumstances is the best “PPE” we have.

In the meantime, if you have any questions or further suggestions as to how we can continue to preserve PPE for our frontline responders, please email us at [qldclinicalsenate@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:qldclinicalsenate@health.qld.gov.au)

- The CDNA National guidelines for public health units – COVID-19 have been [updated](#).
- The Commonwealth government has announced new Telehealth item numbers, pop-up clinics and other services in response to COVID-19. New Telehealth item numbers can now be claimed and information on these is available on the MBS website [here](#). A summary of commonwealth health initiatives is available [here](#).
- Information about the new telehealth/COVID-19 MBS item numbers were updated on 16 March 2020, see [here](#).
- The COVID-19 notification template that is being used in all QH hospitals and services can be found [here](#).

#### Brisbane South PHN response

Brisbane South PHN is supporting our general practices to prepare for and help limit the spread of COVID-19 (coronavirus) in our region. We are working with government, peak bodies and the Metro South Hospital and Health Service (MSHHS) to deliver timely and accurate information, and are committed to working with you to ensure our primary health care workers are informed, supported and equipped to deliver safe, high-quality health care to our communities in regard to COVID-19.

As part of our role, we aim to provide you with:

- latest news updates (previous versions can be found [here](#))
- timely government and clinical information for general practice (resources for general practices in the Brisbane South PHN can be found [here](#))
- resources to enable safe health care delivery e.g. masks, updated guidelines etc.

Brisbane South PHN have established a dedicated webpage for COVID-19 available [here](#). This page includes health alerts and updates. There are also a number of practical resources for general practice on COVID-19. This includes guidance/flowcharts for receptionists and clinicians, posters and how to record care in practice software.

[The HealthPathways website](#) includes real-time COVID-19 updates, current Health Alerts, and guidance on where to refer patients for care and other services (username: Brisbane, password: South)

### Events and workshops

Register now for information sessions focused on the local health system response to COVID-19 for primary care and general practice in collaboration with MSHHS, MSHHS Public Health Unit and other relevant stakeholders. An information session focused on Residential Aged Care Facilities will be held:

- 24 March 2020 - [RACF Outbreak Management and COVID-19 update](#)
- 30 March 2020 - [2020 Influenza and COVID – 19 update](#)

### Access to surgical masks

Brisbane South PHN is distributing surgical masks to general practices and pharmacies with a demonstrated need, for example:

- where there is no local supply available commercially
- where general practices and pharmacies serve a population which may be more likely to have been exposed to the COVID-19
- where practices and pharmacies have an unusual number of patients presenting with respiratory symptoms.

These surgical masks are for patients who present to general practice and pharmacies with suspected COVID-19, and for practice staff who are at risk of exposure, and are not for resale or general use.

A fact sheet on the use of surgical masks in accordance with the AHPPC national guidelines on the prevention and control of coronavirus outbreak is available [here](#).

If your practice or pharmacy requires surgical masks, please contact Brisbane South PHN by emailing [support@bsphn.org.au](mailto:support@bsphn.org.au). Surgical masks have been provided by the Australian Government and supplies are limited.

### Access to P2/N95 masks

Brisbane South PHN is distributing P2/N95 masks from the national emergency stockpile. These P2/N95 masks are only for General Practitioners who confirm they are undertaking specimen collection for COVID-19 in their surgeries. To access these masks for this purpose please complete the [online form](#).\*

Note that patients that require testing for COVID-19 are recommended to be referred to nominated specimen collection centres ([Mater](#), [QML](#) or [www.snp.com.au](http://www.snp.com.au)).

\*P2/N95 masks have been provided by the Australian Government and stocks are limited. These masks will be issued to general practices on a first come, first served basis, until stocks run out. A limit of one P2/N95 mask per General Practitioner applies.

## Resources

Guidance for primary health and community health workers, and the latest updates are available from the [Queensland Health website](#). Please note that as this is an evolving situation these documents may be updated.

National training modules for COVID-19 are now available for general practices and other health and community service providers at <https://covid-19training.com.au>

RACGP have a range of online resources and guides to support general practice, including [a practical guide to pandemic planning for general practice](#).

For information related to non-clinical enquiries or advice not specifically related to a suspected case contact 13 HEALTH on 13 43 25 84.

COVID-19 symptom flow has been added to the national [Symptom Checker](#), an online self-guided tool, which will identify people experiencing COVID-19-specific symptoms, rather than cold or flu. It can be used by the public to provide guidance on next steps, such as calling ahead before a visit to a GP or emergency department.

Queensland Health has an asset library of resources for health professionals, including key messages, on COVID-19. [Download a poster](#) for your practice, or browse the full Queensland Health [asset library here](#).

The [Department of Health](#) will provide regular updates as more information becomes available.

Queensland Health – [COVID-19 information](#).

For additional information on COVID-19 visit the [World Health Organization website](#)

## Contacts

For further information please contact us on 1300 467 265 or your Area Account Manager at [support@bsphn.org.au](mailto:support@bsphn.org.au).

###