



Latest news, 3 March 2020: COVID-19

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.

- People that have travelled from mainland China or Iran are required to self-quarantine for 14 days.
- People that have travelled from Italy or South Korea must practice social distancing (maintain a distance of 1.5 metres between you and other people when out and about in public) and avoid crowds.

It is recommended that clinicians should consider testing people with clinically compatible illness that have been:

- in close contact with a suspected case of COVID-19, or
- have **any history of international travel** in the 14 days before the onset of symptoms.

Countries considered to pose a higher risk of transmission can be found at

<https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-covid-19-countries.htm>

People who undergo testing should be managed as suspect cases and isolated until the results of testing are known. Clinicians should report suspected cases to the **Metro South Public Health Unit on 07 3156 4000**.

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.

COVID-19 resources for general practice

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 in the coming days.

If you are returning from Italy or South Korea, and you work as a health care worker or as a residential aged care worker, you should not attend your regular work for 14 days.

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 nurses are conducting home visits to review these people and provide them clearance.

For a list of approved centres for collection of specimens for COVID-19 virus testing please refer

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

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](#).

Access to surgical masks

The Department of Health is providing access to a limited stockpile of surgical masks for general practices and community pharmacies. As supplies are limited, PHNs have been given the role of distributing surgical masks to practices and pharmacies with a demonstrated need, for example:

- where there is no local supply available commercially
- where 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.](#)

Brisbane South PHN have been allocated a limited supply of surgical masks. If your practice or pharmacy requires surgical masks, please contact Brisbane South PHN by emailing support@bsphn.org.au

Access to P2/N95 Masks

The Commonwealth Department of Health have issued PHNs a limited stockpile of 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)

*The PHN stock of P2/N95 masks is 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.

Further information for health professionals

The Department of Health will provide regular updates as more information becomes available: www.health.gov.au.

Queensland Health has launched a web page with [information for health care workers and the general public](#).

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

Brisbane South PHN will continue to provide the latest information on the COVID-19.

For further information, please contact your Area Account Manager at support@bsphn.org.au

[Visit the Queensland Health website for more information](#)