

GP Connect

Keeping GPs informed in the changing primary health landscape



19 March 2020

Supporting GPs responding to COVID-19

WA Primary Health Alliance is continuing to work with general practice to respond to the outbreak of COVID-19.

GPs can find the latest information and resources on the [Practice Assist website](#) and [subscribe](#) to our dedicated COVID-19 GP Update brought to you in partnership with WA Department of Health, the Australian Medical Association (WA), Royal Australian College of General Practitioners WA and Rural Health West.

Latest COVID-19 GP update

Read the most recent [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Update Wednesday 18 March 2020](#)

Latest WA Health update

Read the most up to date Clinical Alert for GPs on the [Department of Health WA website](#).

GP support programs

In light of the enormous task ahead of GPs in the coming months, it's important GPs remember to look after their own wellbeing. Both programs below provide support to handle work and other pressures, which may arise as the COVID-19 situation evolves:

- [GP Support Program](#) (for RACGP members)
- [Doctors' Health Advisory Service](#)

[Mindspot's 10 psychological tips for coping with infectious diseases](#) could also be helpful with practical advice to help cope with anxiety and worry. The fact sheet also contains Mindspot Clinic's website and contact details, which may be useful for your patients.



Small business support services

Many general practices are operated as small businesses, and as such, are encouraged to make use of the State Government's newly created assistance centre as a one-stop resource for advice and guidance on managing the impacts of COVID-19. The Small Business Development Corporation can provide business owners with guidance on available support options via a dedicated COVID-19 hotline and their website.

Phone 133 140 (8.30am-4.30pm weekdays) or visit the [Small Business Development Corporation website](#)

Further information and support

We encourage GPs to contact their usual [WA Primary Health Alliance practice support staff](#) with queries on COVID-19.

You can also contact Practice Assist on 1800 227 747 or email practiceassist@wapha.org.au for further assistance.

If your patients have any questions about COVID-19, you can refer them to <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/coronavirus>

Clinical Updates

DoH expands eligibility for subsidised flu vaccine

Annual vaccination is the most important measure to prevent influenza and its complications and is recommended for all people aged 6 months and over (unless contraindicated). From April this year, an unprecedented supply of seasonal influenza vaccines will be available through the National Immunisation Program (NIP) for people most at risk of complications from influenza. This includes:

- All people aged six months to less than 5 years (this cohort is newly eligible in 2020)
- All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged six months and over
- Pregnant women (during any stage of pregnancy)
- All people aged 65 years and over (adjuvanted Quadrivalent Influenza Vaccine)
- People aged six months and over with medical conditions which increase the risk of influenza disease complications.

Refer to the [Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation's Statement](#) advice for up-to-date clinical advice on the age-specific QIVs available under the NIP, strains included in 2020 vaccines, timing of vaccination, and other relevant topics.

New NPS resources for patients tapering opioids

NPS MedicineWise has developed new resources to help taper patients off opioids as part of the [Opioids, chronic pain and the bigger picture](#) educational program. The [new opioid tapering algorithm](#) resource is designed to support GPs to prepare a successful tapering plan with their patients who have chronic non-cancer pain. Visit the [NPS website](#) to download the algorithm.

Better Health, Together

In this month's [Better Health, Together video](#), WA Primary Health Alliance CEO, Learne Durrington sits down with Pip Brennan, Executive Director of the Health Consumers' Council and the Hon Roger Cook MLA, Deputy Premier, Minister for Health and Mental Health to talk about our partnership in developing the [WA Healthy Weight Action Plan 2019-2024](#).

Changes to transport of mental health patients under the Mental Health Act

The Department of Health WA has advised the contract for Mental Health Transport (DOH20193996), specifically for patients who are subject to a Transport Order - Form 4A under the Mental Health Act, 2014 has been awarded to a sole supplier, Wilson Medic One (WMO).

WMO will provide three dedicated mental health transport vehicles and crew during the hours of 6:00am to 11:59pm, seven days per week across the metropolitan area. It is mandatory for all patient transports, inter-hospital and community, under a transport order to be undertaken by WMO under this contract. Referrers will need to complete a [Transport Order \(form 4A\)](#) and a [Transport Risk Criteria Form](#) before contacting Wilson Medic One on 1300 284 940. If police are required to escort the patient, call WA Police first on 131 444 to obtain the CAD number before contacting WMO.

COVID-19 related online education and resources

[COVID-19 Practical Guide for GPs \(live cast\)](#)
Joondalup Health Campus
Monday 25 March

[COVID-19 BBV and STI Sector Briefing \(recording\)](#)
ASHM

[The Good GP Special COVID-19 Podcast](#)
RACGP

[COVID-19 Infection Control Training](#)
Australian Government Department of Health

[Managing pandemic influenza in general practice](#)
RACGP

[Comprehensive guide to Telehealth](#)
Australian Telehealth Society