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Coronavirus COVID-19 daily update

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This Chief Health Officer update is intended to provide clinicians and the Victorian public with information about the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Victoria as well as relevant public health response activities in Victoria. Chief Health Officer Alerts will continue to be issued when there are changes to the public health advice related to COVID-19.

29/03/2020

What's new?

Developments in the outbreak

- As of 1pm, 29 March 2020, Victoria has 769 total confirmed cases, 26 people are in hospitals including four people in intensive care. Four people have died. Almost two thirds of cases are directly linked to overseas travel, and 21 were locally acquired with no know link to overseas travel or another confirmed case. In total, 193 people have recovered.
- Of the total 769 cases, there have been 611 in metropolitan Melbourne and 139 in regional Victoria. A number of cases remain under investigation.
- Doctors, nurses, midwives and mental health professionals can deliver temporary Medicare Benefits Schedule and Department of Veterans' Affairs items via telehealth, provided those services are bulk billed.
- Doctors are encouraged to remind all patients that they should stay at home unless going to medical appointments or performing essential tasks.
- This week, Australia's total exceeded 3000 cases. That is expected to increase significantly in coming weeks unless people stay at home.
- If testing health care workers, doctors are reminded to clearly mark pathology slips with 'HCW' to ensure the swabs can be easily identified for priority testing.

- Doctors are reminded to ensure they include a mobile contact number on pathology slips for patients who have been tested.
- Up-to-date [epidemiological data](#)  is available on our website.
- Physical (social) distancing measures should be consistently applied, if at all possible, including in clinical settings. The rule of 1 person for every 4 square metres must be maintained to ensure a safe physical distance.

Current directions arising from the declared state of emergency

- A direction [to detain](#) all people arriving in Victoria on or after midnight was signed on 28 March 2020. This direction allows anyone arriving from overseas to be placed in mandatory quarantine for 14 days in a nominated accommodation facility. This direction supersedes the previous [airport and cruise ship directions](#), which have now been revoked.
- A direction for [non-essential activity](#) (No 2) was signed on 26 March 2020. This direction prohibits the operation of non-essential businesses and undertakings to slow the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). These directions update the non-essential activity direction from 25 March.
- A [prohibited gatherings directions](#) was signed on 25 March 2020. This direction replaces the direction given on 22 March, adding two new categories, namely social sports gatherings and weddings and funerals.
- An [isolation \(diagnosis\) direction](#) was signed on 25 March 2020. This direction requires anyone diagnosed with coronavirus (COVID-19) to isolate at home or another suitable location to slow the spread of the disease.
- A direction for [hospital visitors](#) was signed on 23 March 2020. This direction prohibits non-essential visits to hospitals.
- This follows a direction for [aged care](#), which was signed on 21 March 2020. The [Aged Care Directions](#) make provision for restricted access to residential aged care facilities to limit the spread of COVID-19 within a particularly vulnerable population.

Key messages

Quarantine for Australians arriving in Melbourne from overseas

- As of midnight, 28 March 2020, all travellers arriving into Melbourne from overseas will be quarantined for two weeks in hotel rooms and other accommodation facilities after submitting an Isolation Declaration Card.
- Interstate travellers can return to their home states after fulfilling the mandatory 14 day quarantine requirements.


Supporting healthcare workers

- It's everyone's responsibility to support essential healthcare workers – such as doctors and

nurses – to stay at work during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

- Healthcare workers may need extra help to ensure their children have care so they can work during this period.
- Where possible, partners of essential healthcare workers – who are not healthcare workers themselves – should support them to continue working by taking care of children.
- Older people – such as grandparents – and other at-risk groups should not be engaged as carers to reduce their risk of infection.
 - Victoria has expanded its dedicated contact tracing services. From 26 March messages to close contacts are sent via a new platform called Whispr, which requires the person to respond back to the contact tracing team confirming they are isolating at home.
 - Any healthcare or residential aged care worker with a fever or respiratory symptoms must be tested.
 - Additional personal protective equipment and testing equipment are due to arrive in the coming weeks.

New Orders for Pharmacists and Prescription medications

- Two public health emergency orders came into effect on 26 March and can be found here:
- <http://www.gazette.vic.gov.au/gazette/Gazettes2020/GG2020S158.pdf> 
- ◦ ■ Pharmacists can supply prescription medications without a prescription for one month in emergency circumstances except for Schedule 8 medicines.
- ◦ ■ Doctors prescribing Schedule 8 medicines for non-drug dependent patients will not be required to apply for a Schedule 8 treatment permit for the next six months, but instead check SafeScript.
- ◦ ■ Practitioners will need to apply for Schedule 8 treatment permits for drug dependent patients, including opioid replacement therapy.
- During the pandemic, health practitioners should take all reasonable steps to access SafeScript, as it is a very effective in providing up-to-date information about a patient's prescribing and dispensing history.

More information

Clinical information

[Health services and general practice - coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#)

Consumer information

[About Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - information for the general public](#)

[World Health Organization - health topic - Coronavirus](#) 

Contacts

A public information hotline is provided by Health Direct – 1800 675 398.

Medical practitioners needing clinical information or to notify suspected or confirmed cases can contact the Department of Health and Human Services Communicable Diseases Section on 1300 651 160 (24 hours).

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The department acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Custodians of the land and acknowledges and pays respect to their Elders, past and present.

The department is committed to safe and inclusive work places, policies and services for people of LGBTIQ communities and their families.



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