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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.

02/04/2020

What's new?

Developments in the outbreak

- As of 2 April 2020, Victoria has 1,036 total confirmed cases, 30 people are in hospitals including six people in intensive care. five people have died. 60% of cases are directly linked to overseas travel, and 57 were locally acquired (in Victoria) with no know link to overseas travel or another confirmed case. In total, 422 people have recovered.
- Of the total 1,036 cases, there have been 828 in metropolitan Melbourne and 193 in regional Victoria. A number of cases remain under investigation.
- This week, Australia's total exceeded 4,500 cases. That is expected to increase significantly in coming weeks unless people stay at home.
- The case definition has changed. See the [Health services and general practice - coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#) page for updated information, including new Quick Reference Guide and Guidelines for health services and general practitioners. With reducing numbers of returning travellers, Victoria's testing criteria will now focus on an expanded range of frontline healthcare workers to include paid or unpaid workers in healthcare, residential care, disability care, homelessness support and child protection workers, as well as police officers
- 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.
- 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 [stay at home direction](#) was signed on 30 March 2020, ordering anyone in Victoria to stay at their usual place of residence, other than to work or study, buy essential goods or services, medical care or compassionate needs or exercise in accordance with public gathering guidelines. This direction replaces the Prohibited Gatherings direction.
- A [restricted activity direction](#) was signed on 30 March 2020, replacing the non-essential activity directions given on 25 March 2020. The new direction bans escort agencies and closes playgrounds, skateparks and outdoor communal gym equipment.
- 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 [prohibited gatherings direction](#) 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

Healthcare system

- A deal has been struck to ensure the state's major private hospital operators to ensure they

can continue to care for Victorians during the coronavirus pandemic.

- The deal will see Victoria's public and private hospitals work together to relieve pressure on public hospitals and ensure the entire health system is operating at full capacity.

Flu Vaccinations

- All Victorians are encouraged to get their Flu Vaccination, now available from Pharmacies and GPs. The vaccination cannot protect you from COVID-19 but will ensure your immunity isn't compromised further by contracting Influenza.
- From 1 April, Victorian pharmacists can administer approved vaccinations outside of their normal location – through the mobile and outreach services of a hospital, pharmacy or pharmacy depot, increasing access to immunisations for all Victorians.
- It is also easier for younger Victorians to get these immunisations from their local pharmacy. Appropriately trained pharmacists can now administer the flu shot to children 10 years of age and older.
- Pharmacists will also be able to administer the measles-mumps-rubella, meningococcal ACWY and whooping cough-containing vaccines to people 15 years of age and older – protecting young people from deadly diseases that, combined with the threat of coronavirus, could overwhelm the state's hospitals.

Hospital and aged-care restrictions

Emergency powers under the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 have been enacted to limit visits to patients in hospitals to partners, parents or guardians or care and support people. And the following people are not allowed to visit a hospital:

- recently returned travellers
 - a person who has a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19)
 - a person who has been in contact with a person who has a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) or
 - a person with a high-temperature or symptoms of acute respiratory illness.
-
- Visits to residents of aged care facilities are now restricted to two people per day for a short duration. Exceptions to this rule will be made for people receiving palliative care.
 - Children under the age of 16 will only be permitted to visit aged care facilities in exceptional circumstances.

These directions will be enforced by the Commonwealth Government.

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.
- Health workforce response – expressions of interest
- Clinical and non-clinical healthcare workers are being asked to express their interest in working within the Victorian health system as part of the response to coronavirus (COVID-19).
- Visit <https://healthworkforceresponse.dhhs.vic.gov.au/>  for more information.

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New orders for pharmacists and prescription medications

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- During coronavirus (COVID-19), 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.
- Two new public health emergency orders have come into effect and can be found here: <http://www.gazette.vic.gov.au/gazette/Gazettes2020/GG2020S158.pdf> 

More information

Clinical information

Consumer information

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

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

[Smartraveller website](#) 

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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3000

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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.

