

 Tasmanian Government	THIS IS AN ALERT FROM THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO ALL DOCTORS IN THIS PRACTICE		
	Communicable Diseases Prevention Unit		
25 March 2020	No. of pages (incl. this page): 1	Phone: 1800 671 738	Fax: 6173 0821

COVID-19 Update No. 18

This alert updates the 24 March 2020 COVID-19 ALERT.

- The suspect case definition and testing criteria for COVID-19 has changed. See the updated GP Info Sheet (v9), attached.
- Please refer all patients meeting the suspect case definition for testing. If they are very unwell, organise for them to be reviewed in an Emergency Department, through the Medical Officer in Charge.
- GPs can refer patients directly for sample collection at regional THS respiratory clinics.
- GPs are no longer expected to phone Public Health Services / CDPU to notify of patients being tested for COVID-19. Notification is achieved by the completion and faxing of a Referral for Testing form to the THS Respiratory Clinic / private pathology providers. Please ensure the required details are included on the Referral for Testing form.
- Clinical staff of CDPU can still provide advice on testing if needed.
- Staff at the respiratory clinics will phone referred patients to arrange appointments for sample collection. At the clinics, patients will be re-screened against the criteria for testing and basic observations will be taken. A referral does not guarantee sample collection, and samples will not be collected to diagnose other conditions.
- Please ensure the tested person receives information and facemasks and that they understand their obligation to remain in self-isolation until notified of their test result.
- See the Tasmanian Health Pathways for COVID-19: [Tasmanian HealthPathways](#) (username: connectingcare and password: health) for more information about the referral pathway and general practice preparedness.
- Eight Tasmanian cases were diagnosed on Tuesday 24 March. The total number of cases diagnosed in Tasmania is now 36. **All Tasmanian cases are linked to international travel and/or cruise ships.**

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- The Prime Minister announced new social distancing measures on 24 March 2020, see www.pm.gov.au/media/update-coronavirus-measures-24-March-2020
 - The Tasmanian public school term will end four days early on 5 April, to give teachers time to plan to provide home learning delivery for students.
 - Nationally, as at 06:00 am 25 March, there had been 2,252 (an increase of 429 cases in 24 hours) cases confirmed nationally, with local community transmission underway in NSW and Qld, and starting in Vic and SA. There have been 8 deaths and more than 162,000 tests completed.
 - The current focus of the public health response remains to delay the start of community transmission in Tasmania.
 - **Appropriate and rational use of medical supplies, including PPE and test kits, is essential** to protect supply.
 - The Australian Government is enabling vulnerable GPs and other vulnerable health professionals who are authorised to use telehealth item numbers, to use telehealth for all consultations with all their patients.

What to do:

- Review Primary Health Tasmania's newly developed Tasmania Health Pathway for COVID-19.
- **Use the COVID-19 GP Info Sheet V9 when managing suspected cases.**
- Monitor your own health, being alert to signs and symptoms of COVID-19.

Further information:

- The Australian Department of Health: www.health.gov.au/health-topics/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov
- The Tasmanian Department of Health www.health.tas.gov.au/coronavirus
- The WHO website (for international information): www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus

Thank you for your cooperation and support. Dr Julie Graham, Specialist Medical Advisor, Public Health Services.