

 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		
20 April 2020	No. of pages (incl. this page): 1	Phone: 1800 671 738	Fax: 6173 0821

COVID-19 Update No. 37

This alert updates the 17 April 2020 COVID-19 ALERT.

- **The North-West remains a designated localised area with risk of community transmission.**
- The North West Regional Hospital (NWRH) Emergency Department has re-opened, staffed by Australian Defence Force personnel under the leadership of AUSMAT, while NWRH staff are in quarantine. The North West Private Hospital (NWRPH) and other parts of the NWRH remain closed. Patients requiring a higher level of care than can be provided by the NWRH Emergency Department are being transferred to alternative hospitals.
- All staff (and students) who worked in the NWRH or NWRPH in the past 14 days, and their household members, are in quarantine.
- All inpatients discharged from the NWRH in the past 14 days, and their household members, are also in quarantine.
- Anyone who has visited the NWRH or NWRPH in the last 14 days should continue social distancing and monitor themselves for signs of fever and respiratory symptoms.
- **Patients in (or who have been) in the NW:** Test/refer for testing all patients in the NW (or who have spent time in the NW in the previous 14 days), presenting with fever or acute respiratory infection, including cough, sore throat or shortness of breath. *Note, baseline influenza activity for the year-to-date in Tasmania is very low; there have been no notifications reported since the week ending 29 March 2020.*
- For patients who had recent contact with a known case or spent time (in any capacity) in the NWRH, NWRPH, Mersey Community Hospital or Melaleuca Home for the Aged, refer for testing through THS Respiratory Clinics, for timeliness of results.
- **For aged care residents,** test on site if feasible.
- **For patients who have not spent time in the North-West:** Continue to test or refer for testing other patients who meet the criteria for testing, as per the Information for General Practice sheet (v12).
- **Chest x-rays:** There has been increased referrals for chest x-rays for patients with COVID-19 symptoms. As this increases the risk of transmission to vital staff and the general community, please consider carefully the clinical need for chest x-ray and advise the radiology provider of the possible diagnosis so appropriate infection prevention and control measures are used.

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- Please continue to instruct all patients tested for COVID-19 to self-isolate at home until results are provided.
 - As at 6:00 pm 19 April 2020, there have been 194 cases confirmed in Tasmania (121 in the North West) and 8 deaths (7 in the North West). 111 infections were acquired in Tasmania.
 - There are 1284 close contacts being actively monitored.
 - The Tasmanian Health Service has expanded capacity to report negative test results to improve timeliness of notification. Please continue to provide negative test results to patients you test or refer for testing.
 - An additional testing centre has opened at Parkside Burnie (drive-through facility); refer through the normal pathway.
 - The Infectious Period has been updated in the Series of National Guidelines (SoNG): confirmed cases are considered infectious for 48 hours before symptom onset and usually
 - The definition of a close contact has been updated in the SoNG: A close contact is anyone who:
 - has had face-to-face contact with a confirmed case for more than 15 minutes cumulative over the course of a week, from 48 hours before symptom onset
 - shared a close space with a confirmed case for more than two hours, from 48 hours before symptom onset.

What to do:

- Use the **COVID-19 GP Info Sheet V12** when assessing and managing patients.

Further information:

- For state updates go to www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au | For national updates and case numbers, go to www.health.gov.au
- For PPE instructional videos for healthcare workers, go to www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth
- For COVID-19 referral pathways, referral forms and general practice preparedness go to Primary Health Tasmania's [Tasmanian HealthPathways](#)
- For additional clinical guidelines and decision flowcharts, go to the National COVID-19 Clinical Evidence Taskforce at www.covid19evidence.net.au

Thank you for your ongoing cooperation and support.

Dr Julie Graham, Specialist Medical Advisor, Public Health Services.