

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

## COVID-19 Update No. 44

This alert updates the 28 April 2020 COVID-19 ALERT.

- Facemasks provided through Primary Health Tasmania are for the protection of health professionals and practice/pharmacy staff in direct contact with people presenting with fever/respiratory symptoms, and for provision to suspect/confirmed cases.
- **Patients who do not have respiratory symptoms and are not suspect cases do not need to wear masks.**
- National evidence-based advice about the use of surgical masks is available at:
  - [www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-information-on-the-use-of-surgical-masks](http://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-information-on-the-use-of-surgical-masks)
  - [www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/distribution-of-ppe-through-phns-tranche-3-surgical-masks-and-p2n95-respirators-for-general-practice-and-community-pharmacy](http://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/distribution-of-ppe-through-phns-tranche-3-surgical-masks-and-p2n95-respirators-for-general-practice-and-community-pharmacy)
- **Statewide, please test or refer for testing ALL patients with ANY respiratory symptoms (even mild), including rhinorrhoea, fever, cough, sore throat or shortness of breath.**
- GP-led Respiratory Clinics have opened in Devonport and St Helens and offer assessment and testing for respiratory illness.
- **Testing options now include**
  - THS Respiratory Clinics – see attached for locations
  - GP-led Respiratory Clinics – see PHT pathways for information
  - GP-collected swabs and referral through normal procedures – if appropriate PPE and sampling equipment is available.
- For high to very high-risk patients (see the table below and the GP Info Sheet V15) please, for now and where feasible, continue to refer to THS Respiratory Clinics for testing, for timeliness of results.
- The **'I'm being tested. What do I need to know?'** fact sheet has been updated (attached) to make it clear that asymptomatic people being tested do not need to isolate.
- **For testing in residential aged care facilities**, please call the national Sonic Healthcare toll-free number on 1800 570 573 (8:00 am to 6:00 pm). (After hours please initiate appropriate precautions and call the following morning.) Sonic Healthcare will send a pack to the facility containing the correct swab, form, and collection instructions. The RCF will arrange sample collection using existing staff or will contact the GP if trained staff are not available. For facilities that are remote from the major centres (Hobart, Launceston and Burnie) a small number of specimen collection packs (2–3 depending on the size of the facility) will be provided to facilitate urgent testing if required.

- The North-West remains a designated localised area with risk of community transmission.
- Please continue to provide negative test results to patients you test or refer for testing.

### What to do:

- Use the **COVID-19 GP Info Sheet V15** when assessing and managing patients with symptoms of COVID-19.
- Provide patients being tested with the attached updated **'I'm being tested. What do I need to know?'** fact sheet.

### Further information:

- For Tasmania: [www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au](http://www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au) and [www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au/facts/cases-and-testing-updates](http://www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au/facts/cases-and-testing-updates)
- For referral pathways/forms and general practice preparedness: [Tasmanian HealthPathways](#)

**Table 1: Current high to very high-risk patients in Tasmania (for more details, see the GP Info Sheet V15)**

<b>Very high risk</b>	1. Any patient with any clinical symptoms who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has had close contact with a confirmed case in the 14 days before illness onset</li> <li>• travelled interstate in the 14 days before illness onset.</li> </ul>
<b>High risk</b>	Any patient with clinical symptoms who: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lives in aged care/other residential care facilities or group residential facilities (eg correctional facility, boarding schools) where there are two or more plausibly-linked people with clinical symptoms</li> <li>2. Living in or who has travelled through North West Tasmania in the 14 days before illness onset.</li> </ol>

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