

## **NIHRACS Medical Superintendent update 2 July 2020**

The COVID-19 pandemic is an evolving situation as can be seen in the recent spike of COVID-19 cases in the Melbourne area and the increasing numbers of infections in many parts of the world.

### **Situation on the mainland:**

On 30 June 2020, a total of 7,834 cases of COVID-19 were reported in Australia, including 104 deaths. In the 24 hours prior, there were 71 newly confirmed cases reported.

Victoria reported 64 newly confirmed cases from various settings including quarantine hotels, between and within family households, retail businesses, primary schools and health care practices.

NSW reported five newly confirmed cases: all were overseas acquired and detected in returned travellers in hotel quarantine. WA reported two newly confirmed cases: both were overseas acquired and detected in returned travellers in hotel quarantine. No newly confirmed cases were reported in ACT, NT, Qld, SA or Tas. The daily rate of newly confirmed cases was 0.9%. This increase is driven by the recent increase in cases in Victoria. In most states the risk is low and is still more likely in travellers from overseas countries.

### **Situation overseas:**

On 30 June 2020, a total of 10,199,798 cases of COVID-19 were reported globally including 502,947 deaths. Over half of the cases observed in the last 7 days were reported in the USA, Brazil and India.

### **Border restrictions on the mainland:**

All travellers to the mainland from overseas countries are still required to quarantine for 14 days before being able to move to another state (including Norfolk). There is a developing situation in states and territories as the decision about opening borders changes. The changes and recommendations are fluid. In the past few days NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian has requested people not to travel to Melbourne at all and encouraged NSW accommodation vendors to bar Melburnians. From July 10, Queensland will receive travellers from every state except Victoria, whose residents will need to quarantine for 14 days after arrival. Everyone else will need to sign a form swearing they have not been to Victoria in the past two weeks and Queensland Health Minister Steven Miles warned that strict penalties will apply for people who are not truthful. Travel to South Australia is not permitted for NSW or Victorian visitors, after the SA Government changed plans to fully reopen their borders by July 20. The NT has said they plan to open their borders on July 17, but people who live in Melbourne "hotspots" will have to self-isolate for 14 days at their own cost upon arrival. Tasmania's borders are still closed to interstate travellers.

### **Norfolk Island restrictions:**

EMNI has decided that as per their State of Emergency Recovery Plan, released last week, visitors from the mainland will be able to come to Norfolk as of 10 July. All visitors/residents will be required to complete an online form 3 days prior to their arrival including where they have been on the mainland and whether they have any symptoms that may indicate COVID. The situation on the mainland changes daily and EMNI needs to be able to change their management at short notice, if necessary, to stop the virus entering or spreading. The virus is highly infectious and even one case can lead to a cluster outbreak before that person is isolated. The incubation period for coronavirus is five to six days on average, but can be as long as 14 days. The person infected is able to pass on the virus about two days prior to them developing symptoms. Asymptomatic spreaders do exist – in other words they do not know they are infected but can spread the virus to others although this is fortunately not common.

### **Screening of arrivals to Norfolk:**

As many will know, NIHRACS has been screening arrivals at Norfolk airport since earlier this year with health questions and temperatures. As per the EMNI Recovery Plan, this will cease on 10 July. As Norfolk is a domestic destination, no pre-departure screening is occurring at this time at the port of departure for passengers bound for Norfolk. NIHRACS (with assistance from South East Sydney Local Health District SESLHD and NSW Public Health) is in ongoing discussion with the mainland authorities regarding this situation.

### **NIHRACS facility:**

We have had restrictions to persons entering NIHRACS facility in place since earlier this year. Doctors have been, and will continue to be available, for telephone consultations. I urge the community to make use of this service rather than risking virus exposure to yourself, our patients and our staff. If you are very unwell, however, please call ahead on 22091 so that we may decide where you will be seen by our nurse and doctor. If you require an ambulance, please call 000.

NIHRACS staff will be asking visitors and patients: "Have you travelled to Melbourne in the last 14 days?" In the event the answer is "yes", the patient will be assessed for symptoms and may be either excluded from clinical areas for a period of 14 days after their return from Melbourne, or seen in a separate assessment unit to our main building. The person will be advised to get tested for COVID-19 even if the mildest of symptoms arise. If there is community transmission in other mainland areas, persons arriving from these areas will also be excluded from our facility.

Our hospital and residential aged care area has our most vulnerable people, and we wish to keep them safe. We have strict policies about visitors to this area. Please call ahead if you wish to visit and a nurse will screen you and advise.

### **The use of face masks:**

The routine use of face masks in the general community in Australia is currently not recommended as the rate of community transmission is generally low. This is in line with the latest WHO advice issued on 5 June 2020. The Australian Government's advice remains that most people will not benefit from wearing a mask. Masks are of benefit to people who are sick because virus-laden mucus and secretions are captured by the mask (rather than spreading beyond the person coughing or sneezing), and health care workers who have frequent, close contact with sick people. Obviously if a person in the community is sick, they should stay home rather than go out wearing a mask.

Some members of the public may choose to wear a mask in situations for example, if they are at increased risk of severe illness if infected (for example because of their age or a chronic medical condition). This may provide some additional protection in these circumstances. A few factors should be noted:

- If you do choose to wear mask, understand that it is not a complete protection and needs to be worn carefully
- Coronavirus is spread via close contact, and if you are in a large crowd, you are increasing your risk of infection
- You should keep 1.5 metres away from others wherever possible
- Any time you leave your house you should maintain appropriate physical distancing, hand, respiratory/cough and sneeze hygiene.

Once again everyone at NIHRACS thank you for your assistance in helping us to keep our community safe and healthy.

Dr Michelle Bonnici, Medical Superintendent, NIHRACS

### **General Practice Clinic Update**

Due to the current restrictions due to the risk of COVID-19 the main entry to NIHRACS is currently locked however the General Practice clinic is still open for business for all your health care needs and our emergency department is still operating. To decrease the risk of COVID-19 our processes have changed and Medicare is providing funding for telephone consultations where our Doctors can provide their services without you having to present to NIHRACS. If the assessing Doctor decides you need further medical intervention they will inform you on what to do next. To book appointments please phone our reception on 24134. Please continue to help us to reduce the risks of coronavirus on our small community by taking advantage of our telehealth services.

### **Hours of Operation**

Monday- Friday            8.30am – 5pm

Saturday & Sunday        Closed

Please note the clinic is closed for lunch from 12.30 – 1.30pm.

Please call 24134 for appointments only during opening hours.

If you require medical assistance outside business hours please phone the hospital on 22091. In cases of emergency please dial 000.

### **Flu Vaccines**

Flu Vaccines are still available - just call the GP Clinic on 24134 to arrange an appointment to get one. Cost is \$20.

Information below from Department of Health...

Influenza is a very contagious infection of the airways. It is especially serious for babies, people over 65 years of age and pregnant women.

Vaccination is a safe and effective way to protect you from serious disease caused by influenza.

By getting vaccinated against influenza, you can also help protect other people, especially people who are too sick or too young to be vaccinated. The more people who are vaccinated in your community, the less likely the disease will spread.

### **Child Health Clinic**

Child Health Clinic will now be run from the GP Clinic every Thursday, 8:30am to 4pm by Janine. This clinic is for 0 – 5 year olds and includes: Developmental Assessment, Baby Growth Checks, Emotional and Social Development, Breastfeeding Support, Settling/Sleep Support and Introducing solids.

### **Smoking Cessation Clinic**

It's hard to stop, but with help and support, you **can** quit smoking.

Quitting smoking can be one of the most difficult, yet rewarding, things a person can do. Most smokers say they would like to quit, and may have tried at least once. Some are successful the first time, but others try a number of times before they finally give up for good.

It might take time, it can be hard as your body has become dependent on nicotine, but many people have succeeded in giving up smoking. Become one of them by making a quit plan

The clinic will provide a proven approach to assisting people who wish to either quit smoking or cut down. Every cigarette not smoked is doing good for smokers' health. The clinic uses a multidisciplinary approach to match individual needs.

To make a booking for the smoking cessation clinic call the GP Clinic on 24134.

**All patient information is treated as confidential.**

## **Health and Wellbeing Messaging Weekly Update**

A reminder of the key COVID-19 prevention messages:

- Physical distancing
- Stop any Spread – hygiene
- Look after yourself and others
- Know the symptoms

### **Dry July**

Go dry in July to raise funds for people affected by Cancer. Challenge yourself to 31 days dry or have a dry(ish) July and choose 21 or 14 days.

By going Dry this July, you'll be raising vital funds for people affected by cancer, and you could experience some positive health benefits such as:

- A clearer head
- More energy
- Sleep better
- Lose weight
- Have healthier skin
- Feel a sense of achievement

Check out the Dry July website: [https://www.dryjuly.com/?no\\_redirect=true](https://www.dryjuly.com/?no_redirect=true) for information on how to sign up. There is also a great calculator that allows you to estimate how much money and Calories you

will save by going dry. There is also a useful health hub with some interesting mocktail and snack recipes, fitness information and lots of other lifestyle information.

### **Mindful Eating**

You have probably heard about mindfulness but have you heard about mindful eating? Mindful eating is about bringing your focus to eating and paying deliberate attention to what's going on inside and around you. There is some good evidence supporting the use of mindful eating for helping in the treatment of binge-eating disorders and some evidence supporting the use of mindful eating as part of weight loss interventions. For more information check out an article on the topic at the Jean Hailes website (<https://www.jeanhailes.org.au/news/the-seven-steps-to-mindful-eating>).

