



Practice Connect

Latest news and updates

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Allocation of surgical masks from the National Medical Stockpile

Commonwealth and State supplies of surgical masks are critically low and WA Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA) has, to date, distributed almost 110,000 masks to General Practice and Pharmacy in response to the pandemic.

The WA Department of Health have released [Conservation of Personal Protective Equipment advice](#). Please refer to this in your use of PPE.

WAPHA is doing everything it can to secure masks, both from the Australian Government Department of Health and other sources.

To assist busy practices and to reduce the risk of community transmission of COVID-19, WAPHA is currently having these masks dispatched to your practice.

WAPHA recognises that due to a high volume of requests, some practices have experienced delays with delivery but, we can assure you we are working hard to fulfil your orders. Please note, re-orders will not be accepted within a week of the previous request, except in exceptional circumstances.

For mask requests, visit the [mask order form](#).

Practices can contact their WA Primary Health Liaison Officer or contact Practice Assist on 1800 227 747 or practiceassist@wapha.org.au for further assistance.

New telehealth platform available to all WA general practices

A new simple to operate and consumer friendly video call platform is now available to Western Australian general practices and patients, in a bid to ramp up capacity to combat coronavirus while keeping health care facilities and workers safe.

WA Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA), in partnership with Healthdirect Australia, has launched the Healthdirect Video Call platform to allow clinicians to be able to deliver video consulting capability to their patients in a secure and confidential space.

Health Direct Video Call provides a single, consistent entry point on the health services' website for all patients via computer, phone or tablet, with no need for any further software to be installed.

From here, patients enter an online waiting area for their appointment, reducing the need for administrative staff to generate a separate link, code or dial-in information for each patient.

WAPHA staff have been trained to remotely assist general practices to connect with and utilise the video call platform, with good results reported following a trial in which several general practices participated over the past week.

Practices wishing to connect to the Healthdirect Video Call can complete an [online request here](#).

For any queries, or further support please contact the Digital Health team at ehhealth@wapha.org.au

Update on Practice Incentive Program (PIP) and Workforce Incentive Program (WIP) payments

The Australian Government Department of Health has implemented temporary changes to PIP and WIP to make it easier for practices to continue to manage the impact of COVID-19 and to continue providing quality care to their communities. As advised on 1 April 2020, there have been changes to the **PIP Quality Improvement** incentive payment.

For practices participating in the **e-Health PIP**, pre-payment compliance arrangements will cease during this interim period and payments will be made to participating practices.

Compliance (including post-payment compliance for the interim period) will resume once business arrangements return to normal during the recovery phase of the pandemic. Arrangements for the 1 May to 31 July quarter will also continue to be monitored and advice provided as the COVID-19 response evolves.

Most PIP payments will proceed automatically without a practice needing to perform any additional input aside from making MBS item claims – PIP incentives that are tied to MBS item claims will proceed as normal. You can find out more about PIP by visiting our Practice Assist ['The Tool Kit Practice Incentives'](#) page.

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Update on Practice Incentive Program (PIP) and Workforce Incentive Program (WIP) payments (cont)

For practices participating in the **WIP** – Practice Stream, automatic payments based on last quarter's participation information will not be possible. This is because of the recent transition from the Practice Nurse Incentive Program (PNIP). Given this, practices can either:

- submit a quarterly confirmation statement (by the due date of 30 April 2020) to receive their incentive payment on time; or
- submit their quarterly confirmation statement after this date to receive their payment approximately two weeks after lodgement.

You can find out more about the WIP by visiting our Practice Assist [‘The Tool Kit Workforce Incentive’](#) page.

PenCS CAT Recipes for COVID-19

For practices that have access to the CAT Plus suite of data extraction tools, there are new recipes now available to help you to identify patients at risk of COVID-19. This can help your practice to understand how many of your patients are at greater risk of COVID-19 and can help you to provide more targeted support to these patients.

This fortnight, we are featuring the [recipe to identify patients over 70 years of age](#). Patients over 70 years are more vulnerable to COVID-19 and are also eligible for a free influenza vaccination (anyone over 65 years can get a free influenza vaccination). Using this recipe will enable you to create a list of all patients aged over 70 years. This will give you a practice level overview of how many patients are over 70 years, and you can refine this further by looking at the patients over 70 years for each provider at the practice. An optional step is to then use the list you have generated to send out SMS recalls to these patients. The recall could be to book in for the influenza vaccination or to advise that telehealth appointments are available.

In the next edition of Practice Connect, we will look at how to identify patients with specific chronic diseases. If you are keen to get started before then, all of the COVID-19 recipes can be found on the [‘PenCS COVID-19 Cat Recipes’](#) website page.

If you need assistance, please do not hesitate to contact our Practice Assist helpdesk on 1800 227 747 or practiceassist@wapha.org.au, or your WA Primary Health Liaison Officer or CPC Facilitator.

Best Practice and Medical Director software advice regarding the 2020 influenza vaccines

Best Practice and Medical Director have released the April 2020 data updates which includes all 2020 influenza vaccines, including Fluvad Quad®, which is the adjuvanted quadrivalent vaccine recommended for adults aged 65 years and over. It is important that practices update their software as soon as possible to ensure the accurate recording of the vaccine in the patients notes as well as on the Australian Immunisation Register.

Best Practice: Practices do need to download this release by visiting the downloads section of the [Best Practice website](#) (scroll down to data updates) or following the link on the 'elevate' notice which was sent to all users via email on Monday 30 March 2020. Best Practice advised that it is a simple update and external IT support is not generally required to do the update. Further information: [Best Practice](#) or call 1300 401 111

Medical Director: Unless automatic updates have been set, practices need to download the data update by visiting the clinical update download page on the [Medical Director website](#). Further information: [Medical Director](#) or call 1300 300 161.

Changes to the requirement to bulk bill COVID-19 MBS items

- All services provided using the MBS telehealth items must be bulk billed for Commonwealth concession card holders, children under 16 years of age, and patients who are more vulnerable to COVID-19.
- For all other patients, bulk billing is at the discretion of the provider, so long as informed financial consent is obtained prior to the provision of the service.
- Vulnerable means a patient at risk of COVID-19, so a person who:
 - is required to self-isolate or self-quarantine in accordance with guidance issued by the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee in relation to COVID-19; or
 - is at least 70 years old; or
 - if the person identifies as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent—is at least 50 years old; or
 - is pregnant; or
 - is the parent of a child aged under 12 months; or
 - is being treated for a chronic health condition; or
 - is immune compromised; or
 - meets the current national triage protocol criteria for suspected COVID-19 infection.

Further information is available by visiting our Practice Assist '[COVID-19 MBS Telehealth Services](#)' page, or you can read the latest [MBSonline fact sheets here](#).

GP clinics to get free NBN boost for telehealth

The Australian Government has announced NBN Co is supporting the delivery of enhanced telehealth services by upgrading all Australian GP clinics to 50Mbps download and 20Mbps upload connections at no extra cost for a period of six months.

This will enable clinics to deliver multiple telehealth consultations simultaneously.

Read the full media release [here](#).

Drive up vaccination clinics - advice for General Practice

The Communicable Disease Control Directorate (CDCD) have released guidance for GP practices considering vehicle-based influenza vaccinations.

Drive-up/drive-through influenza vaccination services are a viable approach for ensuring medically vulnerable and elderly persons can be immunised while minimizing the risk of COVID-19.

Read the immunisation provider update [here](#).

2020 Government funded influenza vaccines now available for all eligible age groups

The Communicable Disease Control Directorate (CDCD) have advised Immunisation Service Providers that government funded stock for all eligible age groups can now be ordered.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is recommended that all eligible age cohorts are vaccinated as soon as practicable after receipt of vaccines on your scheduled delivery day. Revaccination later in the same year is not routinely recommended, except for pregnancy or travel.

It is important to continue other vaccination programs, i.e. childhood vaccinations.

View the [Letter to Immunisation Service Providers](#) that has been circulated for further information including [Toll on-line ordering](#) information and available vaccine brands.

GPs are also reminded that all vaccines administered, including influenza vaccine, should be recorded in Australian Immunisation Register, irrespective of the patient's age.

The [Influenza Immunisation](#) HealthPathway has been updated for the 2020 National Immunisation Program, including those changes related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Suite of comprehensive COVID-19 HealthPathways now available

WA Primary Health Alliance has now published the following content on the HealthPathways website:

- **COVID-19 Assessment and Management pathway** – this covers assessing and managing patients in primary care who have, or are suspected of having COVID-19, and for those who have been exposed to COVID-19. This includes up-to-date testing criteria, a link to the WA Health Department online testing criteria tool, location of COVID-19 clinics, Healthdirect Coronavirus (COVID-19) Symptom Checker and relevant resources.
- **COVID-19 Information** – this page includes recommended links to state, national and international reference material.
- **COVID-19 Practice Preparation** – this page is about preparing a general practice to respond to COVID-19, including strategies to manage an influx of affected patients.

Email healthpathways@wapha.org.au for login details if you do not already have access to HealthPathways.

NPS MedicineWise update

In the current environment, NPS MedicineWise are offering telehealth / virtual visits via video call for our current therapeutic topic **Paediatric asthma: breathing new life into diagnosis and management**.

Just like practice visits, virtual visits via video call are approved activities under the RACGP & ACRRM CPD programs. The visiting material is sent to you in advance as electronic and/or hard copy depending on your preference and we can carry out virtual visits via a range of different video conferencing platforms, e.g. Skype, FaceTime, ZOOM, Health Direct, Scopia.

Topics can be delivered in just 30 minutes and can be scheduled at a mutually convenient time – including before or after standard work hours.

We appreciate that you have many competing demands, particularly right now, but wanted to ensure you were aware of the educational opportunities still available to you and your colleagues during this time. To schedule a virtual visit appointment, you can book through the **NPS MedicineWise** website or email BookAVisit@nps.org.au.

You might also like to look at the online information and resources on this topic on our website:

- Medicinewise News: **Spirometry and its role in diagnosing children's asthma**
- Resources for your patients: **Inhaler technique checklist and spirometry guide**
- Online learning module: **Unlocking asthma inhaler technique**

NPS Medicine Wise home page updated

The NPS MedicineWise home page has been updated with useful information for health professionals about diagnosis and treatment of patients with asthma during the COVID-19 pandemic, please click here to [visit our page](#).

APNA – Telehealth for COVID-19

The Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association (APNA) has developed a free online learning activity for nurses interested in learning more about providing telehealth consults during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This interactive module will provide nurses with the knowledge and skills to facilitate telehealth consults, within a primary health care setting. After completing this module, you should be able to:

- Understand MBS items relating to telehealth and COVID-19
- Develop a practice protocol around appointments, set up and billing for telehealth
- Provide telehealth consults during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Inform, facilitate and plan with your practice team to perform telehealth consultations.

A certificate will be available after completing the training.

Please [click here to register](#).

BreastScreen WA temporarily closed

BreastScreen WA (BSWA), the state's breast screening program, temporarily closed from Monday 30 March to protect clients and staff from the risk of coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

All breast screening appointments at BSWA's 15 clinics statewide including the mobile screening service have been cancelled, and no new bookings can be taken at this time.

The closure will also allow BSWA to release clinicians to support any surge demand in response to COVID-19; reduce the demand on Personal Protective Equipment which would otherwise be required if we continue to operate, and to reduce the demand on the acute sector from referrals for treatment.

Find further information [here](#).

Practice Assist: COVID-19 useful links and resources

For useful information and resources, please visit the recently published COVID-19 pages on the Practice Assist website which offer a range of new fact sheets and quick guides to assist you with running a practice during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| COVID-19 | Latest General Practice updates Key helplines & information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated mask order form |
| MBS Telehealth Services | Fact Sheets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medicare MBS COVID-19 Telehealth Services GPs & OMPs Medicare MBS COVID-19 Telehealth Services Nurse Practitioners Medicare MBS COVID-19 Telehealth Services Mental Health Medicare MBS COVID-19 Telehealth Services Chronic Disease Quick Guides <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MBS COVID-19 Telehealth Services Quick Guide GPs MBS COVID-19 Telehealth Services Quick Guide OMPs MBS COVID-19 Telehealth Services Quick Guide Nursing & Allied Health Other Resources & FAQs |
| MBS Telehealth Information | FAQs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Becoming-Telehealth-Enabled Becoming-Telehealth-Enabled-Checklist Telehealth-service-options ACCRM Comprehensive Guide to Telehealth ACCRM Quick Guide to Telehealth RACGP Telehealth Video Consultations Guide RACGP Telehealth Practice Resources |
| Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Links to more practical information and printable resources Aboriginal health and COVID-19 Mental health information relating to the COVID-19 outbreak Advance care planning resources |
| Practice Management | FAQs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> COVID-19-Financial-Support-Measures-for-General-Practices Links to more practical information and printable resources The Australian Safety and Quality Commission accreditation information Rural and Remote Health Update COVID-19 Infection Control Training |
| Healthdirect Video Call | FAQs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please complete the online form to request access to the new Healthdirect Video Call platform for telehealth |

Webinars and online training

Visit our Webinars & Workshops page at www.practiceassist.com.au for the events calendar.

Webinars

How to prepare for and implement telehealth: critical success factors for clinicians

Presented by digital health CRC
Thursday 9 April

COVID-19 and Calm Efficiency in Your Practice

Presented by Bp Premier
Wednesday 15 April

Telehealth Lunch & Learn Sessions: Advanced Telehealth Session

Presented by Katrina Otto, Train IT Medical
Tuesday 21 April

Supporting Trans and gender diverse children and their families

Presented by Emerging Minds
Thursday 23 April

Goals of Care (GoC) is now more relevant than ever before with COVID-19

Presented by Dr Jacquie Garton-Smith, alongside Ms Val Colgan
WA Primary Health, HealthPathways and Cancer Council WA
Wednesday 6 May

Online Training

COVID-19 Infection Control Training
Presented by Department of Health

An introduction to telephone triage
Presented by APNA