



# 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 WAPHA has, to date, distributed more than 158,000 masks to general practices and pharmacies, following the [Commonwealth Distribution Guidelines](#).

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.

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

Please note, re-orders will not be accepted within five business days (Mon-Fri) of the previous request, except in exceptional circumstances.

Please send all general queries in relation to the National Medical Stockpile to [Stockpile.Ops@health.gov.au](mailto:Stockpile.Ops@health.gov.au).

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

## New changes to temporary COVID-19 MBS items and bulk billing incentives

On 20 April 2020, the Australian Government announced further changes to the temporary COVID-19 MBS items and to the bulk billing incentives:

- Two new bulk-billing incentive items (10981 and 10982) are now available where a medical service is provided to a *vulnerable patient*, meaning a patient 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
  - identifies as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent and 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.
- Four new telehealth items are now available for a practice nurse or an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner. These mirror the existing face-to-face items 10987 and 10997.
- 24 new telehealth items are now available for specialists: Six new items for consultant psychiatrists, eight new items for public health physicians and 10 new items for neurosurgeons.
- Specialists and allied health providers are no longer required to bulk-bill COVID-19 telehealth and telephone consultations where the service is provided to a patient with a concession card, a vulnerable patient or a child under 16. Specialists and allied health providers may continue their usual billing practices.
- GPs and other medical practitioners must continue to bulk-bill the COVID-19 telehealth and telephone consultation services where the service is provided to a patient with a concession card, a vulnerable patient or a child under 16 at the time the service is provided.

For more information on these changes, visit [MBS Online](#) or check our [Practice Assist Quick Guides and Fact Sheets](#).

## 13COVID helpline for your patients

You may wish to inform your patients of the dedicated enquiry line for Western Australia - 13COVID (132 68 43) - available seven days a week, from 7am to 10pm.

It allows people to access information and advice on diverse topics including health, community, housing including crisis situations, education, and COVID-19 restrictions, among others.

It complements the Australian Government's National Coronavirus Helpline 1800 020 080.

## Workforce Incentive Program (WIP) - Practice Stream May 2020 quarterly payment arrangements

The Department of Health (Health) and Services Australia recognise that general practices, Aboriginal Medical Services and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations across Australia have been impacted by COVID-19 and are keen to support practices to ensure business continuity.

### Reminder to all practices to confirm your Quarterly Confirmation Statement to ensure you receive your incentive payment.

Participating practices should have received (or will do so shortly if you've elected to receive a printed copy) their Workforce Incentive Program (WIP) – Practice Stream Quarterly Confirmation Statement (QCS) for the calculation month of May 2020.

Due to the transition from the Practice Nurse Incentive Payment to the WIP – Practice Stream, automatic payments based on last quarter's participation information will not be possible. Given this, practices continue to be required to review the information contained in their QCS and submit a response to Services Australia by 30 April 2020.

This information is required to confirm your practice's ongoing eligibility for the WIP - Practice Stream and ensure your payment is accurate. Practices can either:

- Submit your response (confirming and/or updating your practice details) online through Health Professional Online Services (HPOS) using your Provider Digital Access (PRODA) account by 30 April 2020 to receive your incentive payment on time; or
- submit your response after this date to receive a delayed payment

### If you are not able to do this through HPOS please refer to the alternative method outlined in your QCS.

Whilst they recognise the impacts of COVID-19 on the day-to-day operations of general practices, **it is important that all practices confirm their QCS details**, to ensure that they receive their May 2020 quarterly incentive payment.

### Accreditation

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (the Commission) is maintaining the accreditation status for accreditation to the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) Standards for general practices, effective immediately. This means that if a general practice holds accreditation as at 25 March 2020, this accreditation will be maintained during the response phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. Practices that had a gap in accreditation before 25 March 2020 will need to contact their accrediting agency to submit an application for extension through the Commission.

Further explanatory information is available at [safetyandquality.gov.au](https://safetyandquality.gov.au) or via the Advice Centre. Please email your query to [accreditation@safetyandquality.gov.au](mailto:accreditation@safetyandquality.gov.au) and include your contact number. A member of the Advice Centre will then contact you as soon as practical.

## Software upgrades to capture 2020 Influenza vaccinations on AIR

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.

**Zedmed** have advised that their software update which includes the influenza vaccines for 2020 was released in late March 2020. This update includes 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. Visit the help page on the [Zedmed website](#) for further information.

## Updated testing criteria for COVID-19

### New information

Primary care providers are now able to request COVID-19 testing, by referring the patient for the specimen to be collected at either:

- a COVID Clinic;
- a Chief Health Officer (CHO) approved private pathology COVID collection centre; or
- Commonwealth endorsed GP respiratory clinics

WA Testing criteria must be followed by persons requesting or conducting testing for COVID-19.

For more information:

- [Testing Criteria for COVID-19](#)
- [Location of all clinics](#)

## New SKAI influenza resources

The new SKAI resources support parents' influenza vaccination information needs, and guide them in their decisions to vaccinate. These resources are now available on the [SKAI for Parents](#) and [SKAI for Providers](#) websites.

## **New rapid COVID-19 test for regional communities**

Faster turn-around-times in some regional areas will be available for urgent cases with the introduction of regional on-site testing analysers for COVID-19 - with results available within an hour.

The GeneXpert® analysers will be used for higher risk COVID-19 testing scenarios, such as health care workers, police, hospital patients, people living in Aboriginal communities and those from an area with an increased risk of community transmission.

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

## **Supporting practices experiencing shortages of the 2020 influenza vaccine**

WAPHA is aware that GPs across the state are experiencing shortages of the 2020 influenza vaccine.

WA's Communicable Disease Control Directorate (CDCD) believes that there may also be unused stock available within practices that can be redirected to those practices with no supply.

WAPHA is seeking clarity from practices as to whether they do, in fact, have any excess supply of the influenza vaccine. If this is the case for your practice, please contact Practice Assist on **1800 227 747** or [practiceassist@wapha.org.au](mailto:practiceassist@wapha.org.au).

If you have any issues regarding supply of the vaccine that you would like WAPHA to raise with CDCD, please also contact Practice Assist.

## **APNA's Transition to Practice Program: For nurses new to primary health care, or wanting to provide mentorship**

The Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association 'APNA's' Transition to Practice Program is a 12-month education, support and mentoring program for nurses new to primary health care.

APNA are looking for:

- Nurses, whether recently graduated or experienced nurses, who have transitioned into primary health care; and or
- Experienced primary health care nurses to be mentors

Applications open from 20 April and close 5 June 2020. For more information regarding this program please visit the [APNA Transition to Practice](#) webpage.

The Transition to Practice Program has been funded by the Australian Government Department of Health.



## 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 with a specific chronic disease](#). In addition to patients with chronic disease being more vulnerable to COVID-19, it is important that these patients continue to receive their routine care during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, some of these patients are also eligible for [a free influenza vaccination](#).

This recipe will enable you to create a list of patients with specific chronic diseases. You can then use this list to recall patients for routine chronic disease care, a free flu vaccination (if applicable), or to advise that telehealth appointments are available. To help ensure patients with chronic disease continue to receive the care they need during the COVID-19 pandemic, there are a number of temporary telehealth and phone MBS items available for GPs, practice nurses and allied health for chronic disease management. More information on these items is available [here](#).

In the next edition of Practice Connect, we will look at how to identify Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander patients with two or more chronic diseases. If you are keen to get started before then, all of the COVID-19 recipes can be found on the [PenCS website](#).

If you need help, please do not hesitate to contact our Practice Assist helpdesk on 1800 227 747 or [practiceassist@wapha.org.au](mailto:practiceassist@wapha.org.au), or your Primary Health Liaison or CPC Facilitator.

## Managing cervical screening participants during the COVID-19 pandemic

The [Cancer Screening](#) website has been updated to provide [Healthcare Providers](#) with guidance about managing cervical screening participants during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The National Cervical Screening Program (the Program) is encouraging healthcare providers to continue to offer routine screening and follow up.

The Program has developed [overarching guidance](#) to assist clinician decision-making on screening appointments including deferral and rescheduling, depending on individual patient circumstances. In addition, the Program has developed [guidance](#) for the management of patients requiring further investigation and treatment during the COVID-19. This guidance is supported by the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and the Australian Society for Colposcopy and Cervical Pathology.

The Department of Health will continue to monitor COVID-19 impacts on the program, and provide any future updates on the [Department of Health Cancer Screening website](#).

Further queries can be sent to [cancerscreening@health.gov.au](mailto:cancerscreening@health.gov.au).

## COVID-19 HealthPathways Updates

The following content updates have now been published on the HealthPathways website:

- **COVID-19 Assessment and Management**
  - Updated testing criteria and information relating to follow up results was updated.
  - Updated individuals at risk of morbidity or mortality section.
  - Information was added on what constitutes immunosuppression in patients.
  - Information was added relating to immunisation.
  - Added a MindSpot telehealth guide.
  - Added WA Government COVID-19 Enquiries line
- Updated MBS telehealth information on the following pathways
  - **COVID-19 Practice Preparation**
  - **COVID-19 Assessment and Management**
  - **Telehealth**
- **Issuing a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death**
  - An alert was added to highlight the Australian Bureau of Statistics guidance for recording COVID-19 deaths on Medical Certificates
- **Breast Imaging-Screening**
  - An alert was added highlighting changes to BreastScreen WA Services due to COVID-19
- **Osteoporosis**
  - An alert was added highlighting changes to King Edwards Memorial Hospital due to COVID-19
- **Newly Diagnosed Type 2 Diabetes**
  - An alert was added linking to RACGP recommendations for proactive diabetes management
- COVID-19 resources have been added to the resources section for patients and health professionals on the following eating disorders pathways
  - **Anorexia Nervosa**
  - **Bulimia Nervosa**
  - **Binge Eating Disorder**
- **Mental Health Act**
  - An alert was added which included information relating to telehealth options and a link to the WA Department of Health - Mental Health Infection Control Directions

Please email [healthpathways@wapha.org.au](mailto:healthpathways@wapha.org.au) for login details if you do not already have access to HealthPathways.

## Management and Operational Plan for COVID-19 for People with Disability released

The Australian Government have released the Management and Operational Plan for COVID-19 for People with Disability.

The plan addresses factors such as the reliance on close contact with carers and support workers, having a compromised immune system, and the presence of multiple underlying health conditions.

The plan is available to download [here](#).

Media Release: [Protecting the lives of Australians with disability during coronavirus](#)

## Asthma WA COVID-19 Fact Sheets

Asthma WA have developed an information page for people with asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, with fact sheets for individuals, as well as parents and carers.

[Asthma WA COVID-19 Asthma and COPD page](#)

## Supporting mental health during pregnancy

King Edward Memorial Hospital has prepared a comprehensive list of support services available to pregnant women and new mums during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The webpage includes links to information about supports for mental health during COVID-19, a COVID-19 & pregnancy fact sheet, changes to pregnancy education sessions and outpatient clinics at KEMH, as well as information about organisations available to help pregnant women and new parents.

You can direct your pregnant patients to this information [here](#).

## New resources for phone and video consultations

To support you in providing phone and video consultations to your patients during COVID-19, the RACGP has published several resources:

- Summary information – [New items for COVID-19 telehealth and phone services](#)
- Webinar – [Phone and video consultations: A 'how-to' presentation](#)
- [Guide to providing telephone and video consultations in general practice](#)
- [Telephone and video consultations in general practice: Flowcharts](#)



## Paediatric asthma: breathing new life into diagnosis and management

NPS MedicineWise free accredited educational visits on this topic are currently being delivered by telehealth.

Could you be missing important differences between diagnosing and managing asthma in preschool and school-age children, and how treatment of children's asthma differs from that of adults?

This educational visit provides clarity on the latest guidelines for the diagnosis and treatment of paediatric asthma, including the differences between diagnosing and managing asthma in preschool and school-age children, and how treatment of children's asthma differs from that of adults.

Discussion will also cover when regular preventer treatment is required and how to optimise different preventer options for the two age groups.

Educational visits are available as:

- Virtual visit: via video call. Available to support practices who wish to continue educational activities without a face-to-face appointment
- One-on-one discussion: a 30-minute in-practice discussion for GPs, tailored to individual learning needs. Face-to-face visits are temporarily suspended
- Small-group: a 1-hour in-practice meeting for up to 10 health professionals (GPs, pharmacists and nurses). Face-to-face visits are temporarily suspended

Visit the NPS MedicineWise website to book the [Paediatric asthma: breathing new life into diagnosis and management](#).

## IHI blog: Does joy in work matter during a pandemic?

'At a time when health care professionals across the globe are working around the clock against COVID-19, running toward what others flee, it may seem tone deaf at best — or callous, at worst — for leaders to talk about joy in work'.

'All health care leaders are being tested as never before. What gives us hope during these difficult times is the number of leaders that have been seen reaching out to help one another, with humble generosity. At a time when it might be easier for them to focus only on what they need in their own health system, they are helping colleagues across the globe, across the country, and sometimes across town at competing organizations'.

Please click here to continue reading this blog '[Does joy in work matter during a pandemic?](#)', presented by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement.

## **MyDESMOND Type 2 diabetes self-management resource now available online**

The Australian Government have fast tracked the phase 3 pilot of the 'myDESMOND' online diabetes education and self-management program.

This program provides comprehensive diabetes education and peer support for people with type 2 diabetes and is suitable for anyone with type 2 diabetes.

Phase 2 of the pilot has shown significant reductions in diabetes distress which is especially important at this time.

New registrations are now open to consumers who are registered on the NDSS, over 18 years, and have access to a smartphone, tablet or home computer.

### **Diabetes Helpline Extension**

The Diabetes Helpline hours of operation have been extended to 8pm Mon – Fri, and Saturday mornings.

This advice line is for both consumers and health professionals, particularly if GPs need advice regarding available diabetes related services or product supply advice.

The helpline provides access to the Diabetes WA team of diabetes educators, dietitians, pharmacists and exercise physiologists.

**Diabetes Helpline: 1300 001 880.**

## Webinars and online training

Visit our Webinars & Workshops page at [www.practiceassist.com.au](http://www.practiceassist.com.au) for the events calendar.

### Webinars

#### Healthdirect Video Call Familiarisation Webinars

Presented by Healthdirect

Multiple dates starting Wednesday 22 April

#### Virtual Community of Practice: COVID-19 Staying safe in general practice

Presented by Dr Geoff Riley, Dr Richard Choong and Charmaine Dalton

Thursday 23 April

#### Supporting Trans and gender diverse children and their families

Presented by Emerging Minds

Thursday 23 April

#### COVID-19 and Advance Care Planning Webinar for GPs

Presented by Advance Care Planning Australia

Tuesday 28 April

#### GP Education Project: Breast Cancer Update Webinar

Presented by Cancer Council WA

Thursday 30 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