

# Practice Connect

## Latest news and updates

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## Six WA GP Respiratory Clinics now operational

Six Commonwealth endorsed GP Respiratory Clinics are now active in WA, with the opening of two more clinics in Albany and Clarkson in the past week, adding to those already operating in Geraldton, Halls Head, Alexander Heights and High Wycombe.

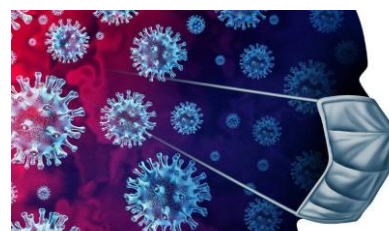
The clinics are part of a national approach designed to limit the risk of vulnerable people encountering people who are positive to COVID-19 or seasonal influenza, and to protect the health workforce from infection.

While daily cases in WA have slowed, the clinics provide an alternative option to regular general practices or hospital emergency departments. Patients visiting the respiratory clinic fit a narrow subset of the total number of patients who visit GPs.

They will see patients only by appointment and, with their permission, will share the results of their tests with their regular GP to ensure continuity and coordination of care.

If you have patients who you believe could be COVID-19 positive, or who present with acute respiratory symptoms that put you or other patients at risk of infection, you are welcome to refer such patients to the nearest GP Respiratory Clinic for testing.

The full list of clinics are available on the [Practice Assist](#), [Health Pathways](#) or the [Australian Government Department of Health](#) website.



## Encouraging your patients to attend the practice for routine health checks and new conditions

Following a drop off in general practice attendances due to COVID-19 fears, we recently launched [See Your GP](#), a campaign to encourage patients to visit their GP for routine health checks and new conditions.

WA Primary Health Alliance want to support practices by increasing the public's confidence that practices are open, are safe to visit, and inform them that they are offering telehealth consultations, where relevant.

The campaign has easy to share social media posts and videos that you can use on your own communication channels.

All you need do is visit [See Your GP](#) and click **Post to Timeline** to share an image or video straight to your practice's Facebook page.

If you prefer, you can download all of the images and videos to share on your website, in your newsletter or on your in-practice screens. The videos have captions to make them easy for people to watch and understand, particularly if the sound is turned off.



## Immunisation education including free yearly updates

WA Department of Health offer a free yearly update for immunisation providers (open to GPs and Nurses). There is also a dedicated influenza module that is updated yearly, and the 2020 module is now available. These all count toward CPD.

See the [WA Health education page](#) for all available modules. The free courses can be located in the "online immunisation updates" tab.

## Serious shortage medicine substitution notice: Metformin

A serious shortage medicine substitution notice has been released for Metformin modified-release (also known as extended-release or XR) 500mg tablets.

Read the notice [here](#).

Read more about Serious Shortage Medicine Substitution Notices [here](#).

## Update: GP Urgent Care Network Pilot

The GP Urgent Care Network Pilot has completed the first six months of the pilot phase. WA Primary Health Alliance 'WAPHA' would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge all practices for their participation in the pilot project, particularly in line with the impact of COVID-19.

This project is an important component of the State Government's Putting Patients First Policy and will provide improved and integrated quality health care for patients in the close vicinity to where they live.

With the completion of MEDrefer into general practice, and the first wave of data uploading, submissions of data upload will be a monthly requirement for the life of the pilot. All pilot practices will receive an e-mail as a reminder to upload at the beginning of each month.

The WAPHA GP Urgent Care Team are working with the RACGP to develop relevant clinical webinars for the coming months for General Practitioners to attend. Further communications on these events will be coming out soon.

For all related queries to the GP Urgent Care Network Pilot, please contact Cheryl Bell, Project Officer by email at [urgentcare@wapha.org.au](mailto:urgentcare@wapha.org.au) or alternatively on 0429 126 925.



## Practice Assist: General Practice Information Pack

To help practices navigate through COVID-19 and beyond from a clinical, patient support and practice management perspective, the Practice Assist team has consolidated a number of useful resources into an online [General Practice Information Pack](#) on the Practice Assist website.

The pack, as part of Practice Assist's dedicated [COVID-19 section](#) on our website, includes information and resources on topics ranging from:

- [Practice Management](#) changes due to COVID-19
- [Public health information, testing and notification forms](#)
- [Frequently asked questions](#)
- [Clinical information](#)
- [Infection control and pandemic guidelines](#)
- [Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\) guidelines](#)
- [Telehealth Information: Healthdirect Video Call, Telehealth and MBS Telehealth](#)
- [Webinars, recording and online training](#)
- [Useful and printable](#) resources
- [Consumer](#) resources
- [Communication tools](#) to reassure and engage your patients

We are always keen for feedback, so should your practice require additional resources please contact the Practice Assist Helpdesk on 1800 227 747 or by email [practiceassist@wapha.org.au](mailto:practiceassist@wapha.org.au).

## AIHW releases report on primary care nurses on International Nurses Day

On International Nurses Day, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) released a key report based on Australian Practice Nurse Association data.

The report outlines the critical role primary health care nurses play in supporting general practice to provide patient centered care and improving health outcomes through ensuring continuity of care, which is particularly important during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This includes the uptake of new **Nursing MBS telehealth items** available for telehealth and phone services, as part of the COVID-19 response.

Read *A profile of primary health care nurses* [here](#).

## WAPHA: Free general practice wellness program

WA Primary Health Alliance is offering FREE counselling support for all GPs and their practice staff across WA through the long established and experienced employee assistance program provider, AccessEAP.

To support WA general practice teams, navigate the COVID-19 response, and to help you deal with the pressures that arise professionally and personally, WA-based general practices can now access WA Primary Health Alliance's General Practice Wellness Program.

General practice staff, as Members of WA Primary Health Alliance are offered three confidential counselling sessions free of charge.

More information is provided in the [attached brochure](#).

You can use your sessions for a range of matters such as:

- Preparing for major life changes
- Changes in your role at work
- Changes within your family (marriage, new baby, divorce/separation)
- Goal setting for your professional or personal life
- Developing new strategies for handling stress at work or at home
- Or simply to have someone to speak to about any of life's inevitable challenges



When you call to access the service, you **must** identify as a Member of WA Primary Health Alliance.

To book a phone or video counselling appointment, you can call AccessEAP anytime on 1800 818 728.

GPs and practice staff can also contact Practice Assist on 1800 227 747 with any questions about the program.

## Guiding principles for maintaining immunisation services during COVID-19

If scheduled vaccine doses of vaccine preventable diseases (VPDs) are missed or delayed, or overall vaccination coverage rates are diminished, there is a risk of resurgence of some well-controlled VPDs or outbreaks of some VPDs, such as measles, during and/or after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Department of Health WA has released an immunisation provider update on [COVID-19 Maintaining Immunisation Services](#).

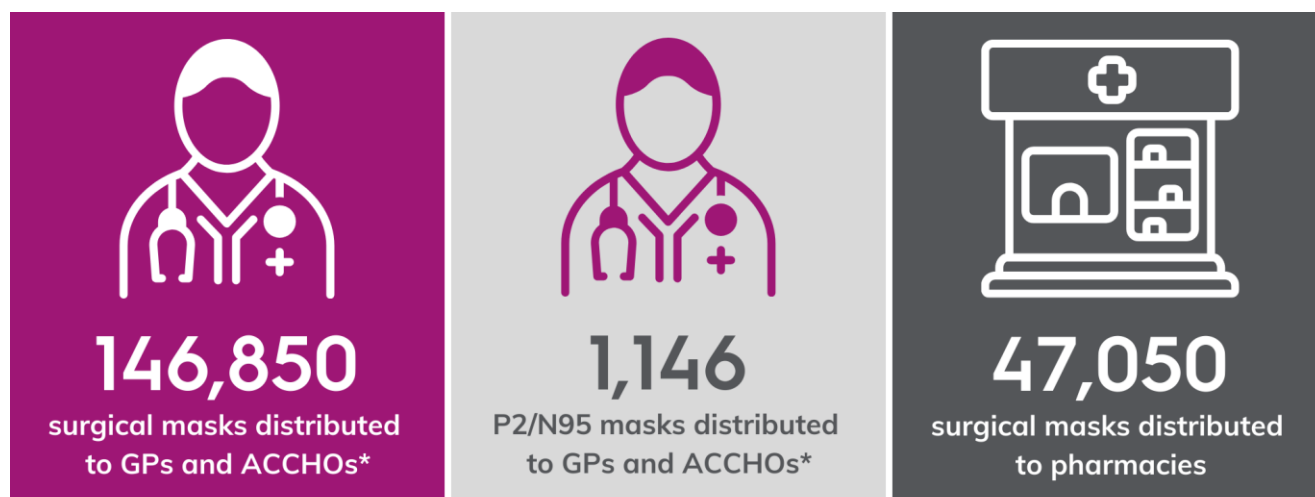
The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) has released [Guiding principles for maintaining immunisation services during COVID-19](#).

WA Primary Health Alliance has also developed a [Reference Guide to support practices with Influenza Vaccination during COVID-19](#).

## Allocation of surgical masks from the National Medical Stockpile

WA Primary Health Alliance continues to operate a significant logistical strategy to distribute masks during the COVID-19 pandemic to practices and pharmacies. We are pleased to announce that we have recently expanded our mask distribution to include allied health practices that meet the criteria of the [Department of Health Tranche 4 guidelines](#).

To date we have distributed 146,850 surgical masks to GPs and ACCHOs, 1,146 N95 masks to GPs and ACCHOs and 47,050 surgical masks to pharmacies.



\*Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations

For mask requests, visit the [Practice Assist website](#).

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).

WWW.PRACTICEASSIST.COM.AU

## Good news story: Practices adapt models of care to keep at risk patients safe

WA Primary Health Alliance is supporting general practices as they continue to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, many practices, and the teams who staff them, have had to change the way they operate to ensure quality care can be maintained.

Highland Medical is an example of how practices are adapting by offering patient care via drive through clinics and telehealth GP consultations, in preference to consultations inside the practice.



The team at Highland Medical Centre

As a Health Care Homes practice, a model designed to support people with chronic conditions to better manage their health, this change is particularly important given Highland Medical's patient profile is at greater risk of more serious illness, if they were to contract COVID-19.

To assist the team at Highland Medical as they work through these new challenges, WA Primary Health Alliance staff organised a virtual meeting to discuss how the practice could continue to provide ongoing support, where and how it was needed.

A key outcome of the meeting was to provide additional support for practice nurses to help them carry out care planning without a patient 'in the room'.

Another great example of a general practice responding to patients' needs is View Street Medical Centre in North Perth. The practice has instigated a number of infection control measures such as sneeze screens at reception, social distancing in waiting areas and a drive through influenza vaccination clinic which has been popular with their patients.



Infection control measures at View Street Medical



Drive through influenza vaccination clinic at View Street Medical

## National Broadband Network (NBN) upgrades for telehealth providers

As part of the Government's continued response to the COVID-19 pandemic, critical work has been undertaken to ensure that all Australian's can still access essential primary care services via telehealth during the pandemic.

The following information has been received in relation to the NBN Co's latest complementary upgrade offers for telehealth providers:

- Telehealth providers on 12/1Mbps can be upgraded to 25/5Mbps (wholesale speed tiers) and those on plans based on the 25/5Mbps to 50/20Mbps, or Fixed Wireless Plus (wholesale speed tiers), where available. This offer is available for six months, starting from May 2020.
- As an essential service, telehealth providers can also receive an enhanced fault rectification service that ensures faults are fixed within a specified timeframe. In addition, this comes with prioritised connections and fault resolutions case management through the NBN Co's Business Operations Centre.

These offers are available for qualified telehealth service providers in registered business premises, providing one or more of the below services by voice, and or internet, via the NBN Network:

- general practitioner services;
- medical specialist services;
- nurse practitioner services;
- mental health treatment;
- chronic disease management;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health assessments;
- treatment of eating disorders;
- pregnancy support counselling;
- treatment of patients in aged care facilities; and/or
- disability services.

For further information please contact the My Health Record Team by email on [myhealthrecord@wapha.org.au](mailto:myhealthrecord@wapha.org.au).

## AMA Medical Products distributing PPE

AMA Medical Products are currently facilitating the purchase and distribution of PPE to out-of-hospital Western Australian health services.

You can view and order products [here](#).

WA customers can use the discount code "AMAWA" to get 5% off their first order.



## All WA public pathology labs now connected to My Health Record

The Australian Digital Health Agency has advised that all public pathology laboratories in Western Australia are now connected to the My Health Record system, providing secure and convenient access to COVID-19 screening for patients and clinicians. Read the full announcement [here](#).

## \$48.1 Million for National Mental Health and Wellbeing Pandemic Response Plan

The Australian Government is continuing to take action to help Australians whose mental health and wellbeing is being affected by the COVID-19 pandemic by providing an additional \$48.1 million to support the Mental Health and Wellbeing Pandemic Response Plan presented to the National Cabinet on 15 May. Read the full announcement [here](#).

## New WA Health COVID-19 resources for diabetes patients

The Department of Health WA has developed a new COVID-19 resource for patients living with diabetes and other endocrine conditions.

It covers how patients can be best prepared and access key services and support during the pandemic. Access the resource [here](#).

## Keep Our Mob Safe campaign reminds Aboriginal people to get free flu vaccine

The Australian Government Department of Health has released a video featuring Professor Tom Calma AO, that can be played in your practice, or on your website and social media channels to remind Aboriginal patients to get their free flu shot. Access this video [here](#).

## Adding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status to a pathology request forms

In order to speed up tracing and assist in protecting more vulnerable populations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) status has now been added to COVID-19 clinics pathology request forms.

GPs are asked to document ATSI status on pathology forms **by hand**, for patients undergoing testing for COVID-19.

Practice software also has the capability to document this under patient details.



## COVID-19 telehealth pathway now available on HealthPathways

- **COVID-19 Requests** pathway is now live and contains the following information on:
  - Testing criteria
  - COVID-19 clinics
  - Commonwealth endorsed GP Respiratory clinics
  - Private pathology collection centres
  - Advice options for GPs, including the Coronavirus Health Information line hotline.
- **COVID-19 Impact on Local Services** pathway is now live and contains information on:
  - Changes to public hospital services due to COVID-19, both state-wide and site-specific information.
  - The service information listed will be monitored and updated regularly as information comes to hand.

### COVID-19 HealthPathways Updates

The following content updates have now been published on the following pathways:

- **COVID-19 Assessment and Management**
  - Updated telehealth resources relating to information and eligibility requirements, telehealth and telephone arrangements, and bulk billing.
  - Updated testing criteria and notification requirements for suspected cases. This includes a video on **donning and doffing PPE**, and **guidance on how to correctly use PPE**.
  - Updated self-isolation links and mental health resources, including a **patient mental health fact sheet**.
  - Updated links to information regarding testing, including current criteria.
  - Updated patient history including assessment of degree of breathlessness.
  - Updated CDNA Interim National Guidance for remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities for COVID-19.
  - Updated information on recommended PPE use as per state-based guidelines, and information on airborne transmission.
- **COVID-19 Telehealth**
  - Added information and resources on new telehealth items available for practice nurses and Aboriginal health practitioners.
  - Updated information on telehealth prescriptions.
- A COVID-19 note has been added to the following asthma pathways, the note provides updated advice with peak body recommendations on how to manage asthma during the COVID-19 outbreak:
  - **Acute Asthma in Children**
  - **Non-acute Asthma in Children**
  - **Acute Asthma in Adults**
  - **Non-acute Asthma in Adults**

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

## NPS MedicineWise: Update

NPS MedicineWise Virtual Visits are still available for the topic of **Opioids and the bigger picture when treating chronic pain**.

This program provides clarity on the role of opioids when supporting patients with chronic non-cancer pain. It covers the latest evidence and offers advice on engaging patients to take an active role in managing pain.

Information and resources covered as part of this educational visit include:

- Discussion includes the implications of emerging evidence on the management of chronic pain
- Advice on how to engage patients in difficult conversations about opioids and tapering
- Patient resources to improve outcomes for patients using opioids

NPS MedicineWise educational Virtual Visits are:

- independent, evidence based clinical updates for GPs about medicines and best practice prescribing
- free (funded by the Federal Govt.)
- accredited by RACGP & ACRRM
- delivered in 30mins with 1 GP, or please allow longer for a group of up to 10
- delivered using Zoom or Skype

To book, visit the GP Education section of the NPS MedicineWise website: [www.nps.org.au](http://www.nps.org.au).

## Baby Steps is coming: A post-gestational diabetes type 2 prevention program

Baby Steps is an online lifestyle and type 2 diabetes prevention program, specifically designed for post-natal women who have had a diagnosis of gestational diabetes during their pregnancy.

The Baby Steps program was developed by the Leicester Diabetes Centre as part of the DESMOND suite of self-management programs and aims to educate and empower women to implement lifestyle changes and reduce the risk of progression to type 2 diabetes.

Baby Steps has been adapted and piloted in Australia over the past 12 months and they are hoping to gain feedback from health professionals that will assist in maximising awareness and accessibility of the program.



Please help them to support women in their post-gestational diabetes journey by taking the survey before 12 June 2020. Either click on the [link to the survey here](#), or copy and paste it in to your browser.

For further information please contact us Baby Steps on 1300 001 880 or via email at [babysteps@diabeteswa.com.au](mailto:babysteps@diabeteswa.com.au).

# Health Promotion Events

## National Palliative Care Week 2020

In 2020, National Palliative Care Week (NPCW) will be held from **Sunday 24 May – Saturday 30 May**, with the theme ‘Palliative Care... It’s more than you think’. Palliative care can help people with life-limiting illnesses to live as well as possible, for as long as possible – supporting their physical, emotional, spiritual and social needs. During NPCW 2020 we hope to spark important conversations in the community about the benefits of quality palliative care and celebrate the amazing dedication of all those working and volunteering in palliative care across Australia. There’s more than you think!

COVID-19 restrictions have forced the cancellation of many physical events and gatherings – but there’s still plenty of ways you can get involved in NPCW!

### What is palliative care?

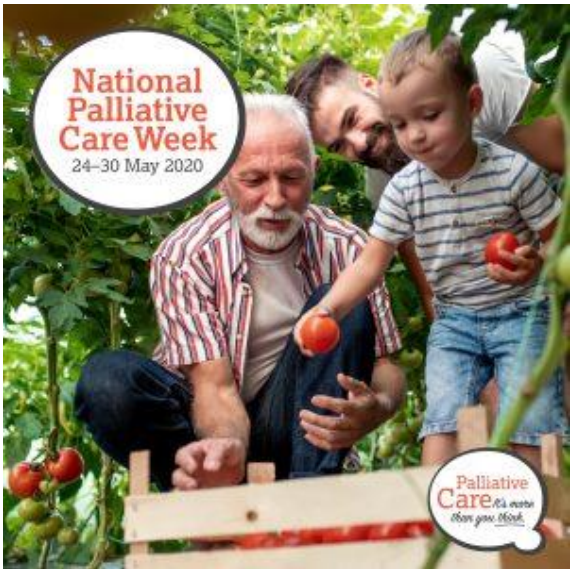
Palliative care helps people living with a life-limiting illness to live as well as they can by managing pain and symptoms to ensure their quality of life is maintained. Palliative care identifies and treats symptoms which may be physical, emotional, spiritual or social.

Lean more and download a copy of [PCA’s brochure](#), “What is palliative care?” [here](#).

### Campaign Resources

Download and share our range of online [NPCW campaign resources here](#), including:

- Banners
- Logos
- Posters
- Social Media assets



Coming up soon...	
National Sorry Day	26 May
National Reconciliation Week	27 May – 3 June
World MS Day	30 May
Bowel Cancer Awareness Month	June

## 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

[View a recorded session here](#)

#### Practice owner's webinar: Navigating a rent reduction

Presented by Health Project Services and RACGP

Thursday 21 May

#### COVID-19 Future Proofing General Practice: Heading into flu season

Presented by WAPHA: Virtual Community of Practices

Thursday 21 May

#### Tune in with TRACS WA

Presented by the Training Centre in Subacute Care WA

Every Friday in May

#### Bringing Telehealth and digital patient education together to support patient experience and health outcomes

Presented by Digital CRC, Curtin University and La Trobe University

Tuesday 26 May

#### Electronic Prescribing Update for Dispensers

Presented by Australian Digital Health Agency

Tuesday 26 May

#### Electronic Prescribing Update for Prescribers

Presented by Australian Digital Health Agency

Wednesday 27 May

### Online Training

#### COVID-19 Infection Control Training

Presented by Department of Health

#### COVID-19 Indigenous Health Module 1-

Introduction to COVID-19 Epidemiology

Presented by Department of Health

#### COVID-19 Indigenous Health Module 2 – Contact Tracing

Presented by Department of Health

#### Chronic Disease Management and Healthy Ageing Program

Presented by APNA