



Patient Information and Social Distancing Requirements for Rehabilitation Units

What is novel coronavirus and COVID-19?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses known to cause respiratory infections. These can range from the common cold to more serious acute respiratory diseases. The virus first seen in Hubei Province, China is called 'novel' because it is new. COVID-19 has been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO), and there has been a significant increase in cases across the world including the USA, Europe and UK. It is likely that the virus originally came from an animal, and it can spread from person-to-person.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

The symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to other colds and flus and include:

- fever
- sore throat
- cough
- tiredness
- difficulty breathing
- nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea

While COVID-19 is of concern, it is important to remember that most people displaying these symptoms are likely suffering with a cold or other respiratory illness, and not COVID-19.

How is COVID-19 spread?

COVID-19 is most likely to spread from person-to-person through:

- close contact with a person while they are infectious, including in the 48 hours before their symptoms appeared
- close contact with a person with a confirmed infection who coughs or sneezes
- touching objects or surfaces (such as door handles or tables) contaminated from a cough or sneeze from a person with a confirmed infection, and then touching your mouth, face or eyes face

What does social distancing mean?

Social distancing includes ways to stop or slow the spread of infectious diseases. It means less contact between you and other people. When you are a patient at the hospital, any activities or sessions you attend will require you to maintain personal distancing requirements set out by the Department of Health.

Maintaining at least 1.5metre distance between other people, and four-square metre rule per person in a room is important. Direct personal contact between yourself and other patients should be minimised where possible, especially if you are attending a group therapy session, or in areas where there are other people such as waiting rooms or gymnasiums. The duration of group therapy sessions will be restricted to



less than two hours in any one session, unless a break is provided. There is a limited number of people permitted in any one room, and if the number has been reached, you will not be able to enter the room until someone has left.

What do I do if I develop symptoms?

If you believe you have been exposed to, or have COVID-19, you should inform your doctor or a member of the clinical team immediately. If you have any new symptoms that are cold or flu like you should immediately inform your doctor, nurse or therapist.

How you can help minimise the risk of COVID-19

Practising good hand and sneeze/cough hygiene and keeping your distance from others when you are sick is the best defence against most viruses, including COVID-19.

You should:

1. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, before and after eating, and after going to the toilet.
2. Cover your cough and sneeze into your elbow, dispose of tissues, and use alcohol-based hand sanitiser.
3. Avoid direct contact with others (stay more than 1.5 metres from people) including touching, kissing, hugging, and other intimate contact.
4. Do not share cigarettes or vapes. Ask your doctor about Nicotine replacement.
5. When eating, if in a communal dining room, always maintain safe distances, do not share food or use self-service. Use cutlery, and do not use your hands for eating without performing hand hygiene first.
6. Tell a member of the clinical team if you are unwell.
7. Exercise personal responsibility for safe distancing measures.
8. If you are asked by staff to wear a surgical face mask, after putting it on to cover your nose and mouth, do not touch the front of the mask and remove it using the ear loops or head straps. Dispose of the used mask into a waste bin and perform hand hygiene with soap and water or alcohol hand rub.

Should I be tested for COVID-19?

Your doctor will tell you if you should be tested. They will arrange for the test. Generally, you will be tested if you develop fever or respiratory symptoms and meet at least one the following criteria:

- you have returned from overseas in the past 14 days
- you have been in close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 in the past 14 days
- you travelled on a cruise ship (either passenger or crew) in the 14 days before developing symptoms
- you are a health care, aged care or residential care worker
- you have lived in an area where there is a higher risk of community transmission, as defined by the local public health unit

Your Doctor will order tests for COVID-19 if you meet all of the following criteria:

- you are an inpatient at the hospital
- you have fever and serious respiratory symptoms
- there is no other clear cause of the symptoms

What does “Isolation” mean in hospital?

If your doctor suspects you have symptoms related to COVID-19 you will be asked to undergo a test. You will have to remain in your room while in hospital and will not be permitted to have visitors. In hospital, this is called isolation. Staff who are looking after you during this time will be wearing personal protective Equipment (PPE) that includes mask, gown, eye protection and gloves for providing of all care to you.

If you are required to leave your room to attend other procedures or other areas of the facility, you will be asked to wear a surgical mask whilst you are out of your room.

Who is most at risk?

In Australia, the people most at risk of getting the virus are:

- travellers who have recently been overseas
- those who have been in close contact with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19
- people in correctional and detention facilities
- people in group residential settings

People who are, or are more likely to be, at higher risk of serious illness if they get the virus are:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 50 years and older with one or more chronic medical conditions
- People 65 years and older with chronic medical conditions
- People 70 years and older
- People with compromised immune systems

At this stage the risk to children and babies, and the role children play in the transmission of COVID-19, is not clear. However, there has so far been a low rate of confirmed COVID-19 cases among children, relative to the broader population. There is limited evidence currently regarding the risk in pregnant women.

How is the virus treated?

There is no specific treatment for coronaviruses. Antibiotics are not effective against viruses. Most of the symptoms can be treated with supportive medical care.

Can I have family and friends visit me whilst I am in hospital?

Due to the risk of an outbreak of COVID-19, the hospital has restricted visitors at this time and they will advise you how many visitors, if any, you will be able to have.

You should stay in touch by phone and on-line with your family and friends.

Should I wear a face mask?

If you are being tested for COVID-19, or a suspected case then you will be asked to stay in your room, healthcare workers will wear personal protective Equipment (PPE) that includes mask, gown, eye protection and gloves for providing of all care to you.

If you need to leave your room for tests or for transfer, you will be instructed to wear a mask over your mouth and nose.

You do not need to wear a mask if you are healthy.

Face masks more generally are not recommended. A face mask will not protect you against becoming infected. While the use of face masks can help to prevent transmission of disease from infected patients to others, face masks are not currently recommended for use by healthy members of the public for the prevention of respiratory.

What should I do if I am worried?


If you have concerns about your health, speak to your doctor, your nurse, or your program therapist. When you are concerned about a change in your condition, feel that you may be getting worse or feel that your concerns have not been followed up, then you can call the Ramsay Rule number: 02 8876 9459

If you would like more information

For the latest advice, information and resources, go to www.health.gov.au

COVID-19: IDENTIFYING THE SYMPTOMS

Coronavirus
(COVID-19)

SYMPTOMS	COVID-19	COLD	FLU
	Symptoms range from mild to severe	Gradual onset of symptoms	Abrupt onset of symptoms
Fever 	Common	Rare	Common
Cough 	Common	Common	Common
Sore Throat 	Sometimes	Common	Common
Shortness of Breath 	Sometimes	No	No
Fatigue 	Sometimes	Sometimes	Common
Aches & Pains 	Sometimes	No	Common
Headaches 	Sometimes	Common	Common
Runny or Stuffy Nose 	Sometimes	Common	Sometimes
Diarrhea 	Rare	No	Sometimes, especially for children
Sneezing 	No	Common	No

Adapted from material produced by WHO, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



TOGETHER WE CAN HELP STOP THE SPREAD AND STAY HEALTHY.

For more information about **Coronavirus (COVID-19)** visit health.gov.au



Australian Government

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