



COUNCIL OF PRESIDENTS OF MEDICAL COLLEGES

POSITION STATEMENT

17 April 2020

THE IMPORTANCE OF MANAGING YOUR HEALTH DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

This is a statement from the Council of Presidents of Medical Colleges (CPMC) on the importance of ensuring all Australians continue to manage their health during the COVID-19 pandemic. CPMC comprises all fifteen of Australia's specialist Medical Colleges, half of which are also located in New Zealand.

CPMC supports the Australian Government's National COVID-19 Plan containing key measures to combat the disease (1). Central to the plan is the aim to stop the spread of the disease within the community. A key element is the expansion of Medicare – subsidised Telehealth services for all Australians. Taking a *Virtual First* approach, patients can call their General Practitioner or Medical Specialist in advance to see if the consultation can be carried out by the telephone or video conference. If a prescription is issued the PBS medicines can be delivered home at no additional cost (2).

Maintaining the health of the Australian population is a key priority and these precautions are absolutely necessary to protect others and stop the spread of COVID-19. However, people with a new non-COVID19 related or any chronic illness must still maintain their health and should continue to have regular clinical reviews by their GPs and where appropriate, their specialists. This includes continuing to undertake routine blood tests and screening. College Presidents urge people not to stop seeking treatment for acute and urgent medical issues or conditions as doing so can add risk and make situations much worse. In extreme cases this can be life threatening.

The changing daily circumstances and widespread media reporting and commentary on COVID-19 means this may increase individual and community anxiety, so seeking help to maintain mental health is important (3). There are resources available for doctors (4). Maintaining the general population health and wellbeing throughout the COVID-19 pandemic also means getting routine vaccinations done. All Australians, particularly at risk populations including the elderly, those with pre-existing medical conditions, indigenous people and healthcare workers, should consider getting their influenza vaccine cover either through the GP or pharmacy.

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Fact Sheets

- (1) <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-national-health-plan-resources>
- (2) <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/covid-19-national-health-plan-electronic-prescribing-a-guide-for-patients>
- (3) <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/covid-19-national-health-plan-supporting-the-mental-health-of-australians-through-the-coronavirus-pandemic>
- (4) Eg: Doctors Health Advisory Service <https://www.drs4drs.com.au/getting-help/> A peer support network at <https://twitter.com/HandnHandAU>