

 Tasmanian Government	THIS IS AN ALERT FROM THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO ALL DOCTORS IN THIS PRACTICE		
	Communicable Diseases Prevention Unit		
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## COVID-19 Update No. 57

This alert updates the 12 June 2020 COVID-19 ALERT.

- Tasmania has gone 40 days without a new case being identified. Please don't get complacent. The situation in Victoria shows how quickly COVID-19 outbreaks can escalate.
- With the low likelihood of patients in Tasmania testing positive to COVID-19, now is the time to make sure your practices have processes in place to triage, assess and test where needed, patients presenting with symptoms of acute respiratory infection (ARI). These processes need to be the 'new normal'.
- We are seeing increasing levels of rhinovirus, especially in children. The possibility of these children being positive for COVID-19 is very low. They should be assessed using standard precautions and the need for additional PPE determined by risk assessment, ie whether or not they meet the epidemiological criteria for a suspect case (recent contact with a known case or interstate/international travel, or health or aged care worker).

### Testing:

- Tasmania is promoting enhanced testing of all patients presenting with ARI, as part of an Australian wide surveillance plan. Please inform patients that their risk of having COVID-19 is low (unless they have epidemiological risk factors).
- Symptomatic people should stay at home until their symptoms resolve. If symptoms resolve and patients were tested as part of the enhanced testing strategy **they do not need to stay at home until they receive their result.**
- Test/refer for testing patients with *any* of the following symptoms (even mild): fever or history of fever (eg night sweats, chills), rhinorrhoea, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath **or loss of smell or taste.** Also test/refer for testing patients (including children) who have had **symptoms in the last 7 days.**
- If you are unable to test within your clinic, please refer patients for the testing – see attached sheet (Testing Clinic Details) and Health Pathways to download the referral form.
- Use clinical judgment when considering retesting *during the same illness* if a patient's first result is negative. Given the low probability of patients without epidemiological risk factors returning positive results, people tested as part of enhanced testing (ie without epidemiological risk factors) do not need to be re-tested. Please re-test for new episodes of ARI.
- When collecting samples, **oropharyngeal and bilateral deep nasal swabs** are sufficient and less uncomfortable for patients than nasopharyngeal swabs. See the Public Health Laboratory Network [instructional sheet on COVID-19 swab collection](#) and updated GP Info Sheet (Version 22, attached).
- If specimen collection is the only procedure required (ie without clinical examination), **the need for a gown/apron is based on risk assessment.** A gown/apron is only needed during specimen collection if close physical contact with a symptomatic suspect case (meets epidemiological criteria) or splash/spray of body substances is anticipated. Don gloves, surgical mask and eye protection (safety glasses or face shield).
- If collecting samples yourself, please provide the **'I've been tested, now what?'** fact sheet (attached).
- Patients being referred for testing who are at low risk of having COVID-19 (ie not in quarantine) can now use **public transport** to access testing. The **'I'm being tested, what do I need to know?'** fact sheet (attached) has been updated.
- Children under 5 years should be assessed by a GP before being tested. Callers to the Public Health Hotline seeking testing for children <5 years are encouraged to contact their GP.
- Mobile testing** clinics continue to supplement THS and GP-led clinics in Burnie, Devonport, Hobart and Launceston and St Helens. Mobile clinics will be in **St Marys** 27–28 June.

## What to do

- Use the **COVID-19 GP Info Sheet v22 (updated)** when assessing and managing patients with symptoms of COVID-19. This sheet has updated information about PPE and sample collection, and includes information about arranging testing in residential care facilities.
- For patients you test, provide the **'I've been tested. What do I need to know?'** fact sheet and negative test results.
- For patients you refer for testing, provide the updated **'I'm being tested. What do I need to know?'** fact sheet.
- **Please ensure your practice has a [COVID-19 Safe Work Plan](#)**

See the [Direction for COVID-19 Workplace Plans](#), which sets the minimum standards for COVID-safe workplaces. Having a COVID-19 Safe Work Plan is the best way to demonstrate compliance with the minimum standards.

## More information

- For Tasmania: [www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au](http://www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au) and [www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au/facts/cases-and-testing-updates](http://www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au/facts/cases-and-testing-updates)
- For referral pathways/forms and general practice preparedness: [Tasmanian HealthPathways](#)
- [CDNA National Guidelines \(SoNG\) for COVID-19](#) last updated 23 June 2020 with new information on retesting in low pre-test probability settings and a revised definition of COVID-19 death.

Thank you for your ongoing support, Dr Julie Graham, Specialist Medical Advisor, Public Health Services.