**Coronavirus (COVID-19) practice plan**

This practice plan has been developed by Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network to assist practices with their response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It provides a series of ideas that may be useful for practices implementing measures to meet COVID-19 guidelines.

**PREPARATION**

Appoint lead/s to receive and disseminate information from the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) - see links below.

Educate staff on current information as it comes to hand. Practice huddles could be used for discussion of updated information

Remember the health and well-being of all staff. You may wish to do a “health check-in” with each other at the start of each day to check on general and mental health.

Consider how you could structure your staff shifts in case a team member becomes ill. One option is to use A and B teams for business continuity, which may free up a consultation room for isolation. Re-iterate to staff the need for flexibility for everyone’s safety. For example, Team A may work morning shift and Team B work afternoon independent of each other so if a member of Team A becomes ill and therefore the whole team needs to self-isolate, Team B can continue to keep the practice open.

Update the practice phone message to include questions about coronavirus and ask that the patient informs reception once they get off hold.

Create a news board with updated information in the staff room.

Review your pandemic plan, and ensure it is up to date

Discuss with your practice team how you can support your vulnerable patients and reduce the impact on them without compromising their medical needs. For example, elderly, immuno-compromised, pregnant and patients with co-morbidities.

Update your policies and procedures to reflect changes.

**INFECTION CONTROL**

Review your environmental cleaning policy and procedures:

* Use TGA approved cleaning products such as Clinell or a one-step detergent/chlorine-based product to wipe down benches, door handles, telephone, seats, EFTPOS machine, pens, hand sanitiser casing, etc.
* Consider waste management and disposal of PPE
* Establish a daily cleaning schedule such as morning, lunch and closing by one designated staff member with PPE.
* Exceptional cleaning needs to be performed after a potential or confirmed case.

Update the spills kits and ensure all staff are aware of where it is kept, its contents and how to use it.

Educate all staff on the correct application and removal of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

Follow hand hygiene practices:

* + When and how to wash hands
  + Use of hand sanitisers
  + Correct disposal of tissues

**RECEPTION**

Consider using a perspex screen at reception to protect staff.

Request patients bring their own pen to sign or press buttons on the EFTPOS machine. Staff should avoid touching credit cards.

Use mobile phones to paywave and receive Medicare refunds into patient accounts.

Consider pre-payment for privately billed patients.

Reception staff could triage patients at the main entrance if they are wearing PPE. Patients should be asked to wash their hands with sanitiser before entering the practice.

Consider placing an A frame board at the entrance of your practice and/or at reception area.

Practices using self check-in services may prefer to use alternative options to reduce the transmission of infection.

You may wish to consider having separate sessions for potential infectious patients to attend at a different time from other patient bookings.

**TRIAGE**

Online bookings

* Practices may consider suspending this option and/or discussing with their online booking provider the option of having a screening message before booking an appointment.

Over the phone

* Screen patients before booking appointments and notate this against the appointment. Keep on-hold messages up to date, instructing patients to let reception know of their symptoms so they can be triaged appropriately.

Website

* Update your website frequently to reflect the latest information. Provide reassurance to patients by explaining the protection you have put in place if they need to visit the doctor.

**WAITING ROOM**

Educate patients about cough etiquette and hand hygiene by updating posters in the waiting room and hand washing areas.

Implement **social distancing** by asking all patients to sit 1.5 m apart. If this is not possible, patients could be asked to wait in the car until called by reception to come into the waiting room. For example, you could have one or two patients (dependant on waiting room size) in the waiting room and as they move in to see the doctor, the next patient is called to come into the waiting room.

Put tape down on the floor to indicate what social distancing looks like and remove every second chair from the waiting room. If your clinic has rows of chairs which are joined together, place red tape on some seats to ensure patients sit at least 1.5m apart.

Remove toys and books. This will reduce the amount of cleaning and cross infection

**PATIENTS SUSPECTED OF HAVING COVID-19**

For the isolation of patients suspected to have COVID-19, you could consider the following:

* Ask patients to wait in their car and call the practice on arrival
* GPs/nurses may need to perform telephone consultation with the patient to make an informed decision
* Consult patient in their car
* Isolate in a separate room preferably with a separate entrance from main entrance if possible (meet patients at entrance and hand them a surgical mask properly fitted before entering the practice)
* Tents may be set up in the car park or garage if available
  + - If seeing patients in a car or in a purpose-built area outside the practice, ensure you have all relevant equipment: PPE, clinical waste bin, hand sanitiser, environmental cleaning product, medical equipment
* Ask patients to conduct proper hand hygiene
* Consider having hand sanitiser outside the practice entrance
* If a GP suspects a patient to have coronavirus, they should apply their PPE
* To undertake diagnostic testing refer to latest version of guidelines for health services and general practitioners on the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services website

Post assessment:

* Ask the patient to take their mask with them, leave without stopping and settle their account over the phone
* The assessment room should be cleaned with TGA approved products as per your environmental cleaning protocol
* Remove and dispose of PPE appropriately
* Remember to wash goggles (if reusable) after each use with TGA approved products or one-step detergent/chlorine-based product

**ADVICE AND INFORMATION**

National hotline for patients: 1800 020 080

Victorian hotline for patients: 1800 675 398

For medical practitioners reporting a confirmed case or seeking advice: 1300 651 160

Eastern Melbourne PHN: <https://www.emphn.org.au/>

Victorian Department of Health and Human Services: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>

Australian Department of Health: <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>

RACGP: <https://www.racgp.org.au/coronavirus>

**RESOURCES**

[Hand Hygiene posters](https://www.hha.org.au/local-implementation/promotional-materials/posters)

[Managing pandemics](https://www.racgp.org.au/running-a-practice/practice-management/managing-emergencies-and-pandemics/managing-pandemics)

[Correct use of personal protective equipment](https://www.racgp.org.au/FSDEDEV/media/documents/Running%20a%20practice/Practice%20resources/Correct-use-of-personal-equipment.pdf)

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