



COVID-19 (coronavirus) update – 18 March 2020

Dear colleagues,

Metro North's response to COVID-19 continues to change and evolve on a daily basis, sometimes as often as hourly. As Queensland's largest Hospital and Health Service, we are stepping up to the challenge and, where required, need do things differently to help minimise the spread of COVID-19 in our community and maximise our capacity to respond. I am confident that together we have the ideas and capability to make the changes necessary to meet this challenge 'head on'.

Changes to COVID-19 testing criteria

Overnight, the Communicable Diseases Branch updated the testing recommendations for Queensland to include arrangements for healthcare workers. The current advice is set down in the COVID-19 Public Health Alert No. 5 and states that COVID-19 testing should only occur if a person:

- Has a fever OR acute respiratory symptoms; AND
 - travelled overseas within the previous 14 days, OR
 - Had recent close contact with a confirmed case within the previous 14 days
- Has severe community-acquired pneumonia requiring admission with no other identifiable cause; or
- Is a healthcare worker with direct patient contact who has a fever (37.5 or greater) AND an acute respiratory infection (shortness of breath, cough and/or sore throat)

Testing outside this guidance should be discussed with the supporting Infectious Disease Service and the Metro North Health Incident Commander.

Correct use of PPE Video

It is vital we continue to practice the correct methods for donning, doffing and working in PPE. On our QHEPS page, there are numerous visual aids available for the workplace. A recent addition is a [video aide memoire](#). I encourage everyone to watch it. I also encourage Line Managers to highlight this to all of your staff in the coming days.

Flexible work arrangements

Not all roles are suitable for flexible work arrangements, but I encourage that we all look for those opportunities where flexible work arrangements would be appropriate. There are a range of tools available to support flexible work arrangements, but these aren't always easy to find and/or navigate. To assist you, the Digital Metro North team is developing some quick checklist and guiding tools for workplaces to use. There will be more information coming about this in the next few days.

Maintaining personal information security

As this COVID-19 event unfolds, it is important that staff stay mindful of patient privacy and ensuring their privacy of their information. There are laws that set out how medical records and information can be shared and viewed. All healthcare professionals are bound

by these rules. This means we cannot discuss health information with anyone not involved in patient care without their consent. During this busy time, it is important we take a moment to ensure all medical information is used and stored in a way that protects patient privacy.

I would also like to remind all health staff that when they are patients (e.g. are tested for influenza like illness, or COVID-19) that it is inappropriate to access your own records. Similarly, it is inappropriate to access the records of a family member or a friend.

I trust that as you finish your shift today/tonight, that you are able to reflect on the long way we have come in preparing for supporting our community in this COVID-19 event. As ever, I thank you for your excellent work.

Kind regards,

Dr Liz Rushbrook

Metro North Health Incident Controller