

MESSAGE FROM THE COVID-19 HEALTH INCIDENT CONTROLLER

Metro North Hospital and Health Service

Dr Elizabeth Rushbrook



29 April 2021

Dear colleagues,

With the COVID-19 situation in India continuing to develop, I wanted to take this opportunity to reflect on how blessed we are living here in Australia. To quote the Chief Health Officer, “this is a wicked virus”, and the situation in India shows us that this pandemic is far from over. This means that the processes and systems we have in place to protect us, such as our hotel quarantine system, our PPE, and our vaccination program, are going to remain part of life for some time to come.

PPE fit testing

Our fit testing program is now available across our facilities. We are focusing on ensuring staff identified in the priority high risk group are fit tested as soon as possible. This includes staff working in the COVID wards, infectious diseases wards, intensive care units, fever clinics, emergency departments and hotel quarantine.

The purpose of the program is to find a mask/respirator that fits you and usually takes approximately 20-30 minutes per test. If you are unable to find an appropriately fitting P2/N95 mask, you should notify and work together with your line manager to determine an appropriate solution.

Where culturally appropriate, please ensure you are clean shaven (or only have facial hair that does not interfere with the fitting surfaces of the mask/respirator). This will ensure you are able to achieve an effective face seal.

We now have a schedule for our fit testing program across our facilities. Below are testing times and locations available over the next three days. The published schedule from now until 7 May 2021 is available on our [extranet site](#). Please continue to check this page, as we will regularly update it with new fit testing sessions.

Date	Facility	Location	Targeted Area	Time	Provider
Friday, 30 April	RBWH	Wattlebrae DTU	COVID priority	0800-1700	CSDS
	TPCH	Thoracic Ward Tute Room 1	ID, COVID Ward, POOL	0700-1800	CSDS
	REDH	ICU and COVID Ward	ICU/COVID	0800-1100 1200-1700	SureFit Services
Saturday, 1 May	RBWH	ICU Pod 1	ICU	0800-1700	CSDS
Sunday, 2 May	TPCH	Thoracic Ward Tute Room 1	ICU (any ID, COVID Ward, POOL)	0800-1700	CSDS

Vaccine update

Further details have come out from federal and state governments about the vaccination rollout, particularly details around access to the Pfizer vaccine. From Monday 3 May 2021:

- Pfizer will be limited to people aged under 50 years.
- Existing Pfizer appointments booked regardless of the person's age will be honoured, however all new appointments and 'walk-ins' will only be offered to eligible persons under the age of 50.
- All 'walk-ins' to Pfizer clinics of people older than 50 will be referred to an AstraZeneca clinic to be offered the AstraZeneca vaccine.

There are, however, exceptions to this:

- A person (aged 50 years and over) who has already received their first dose of Pfizer will be able to receive their second dose of Pfizer.
- Phase 1a eligible people are those working directly with **confirmed** COVID-19 patients or environments (e.g. international border control, hotel quarantine and COVID-19 positive wards). This cohort, if not yet vaccinated, will be able to access the Pfizer vaccine **regardless of age** to ensure they are fully vaccinated in the shortest period of time.

As a reminder for everyone, your family members and household contacts are invited to register for a vaccine, particularly those who are over 50. Registrations can be made via our [COVID-19 vaccinations webpage](#). If you're still unsure about your eligibility for a vaccine, you can use the [Vaccine Eligibility Checker](#) or you can read the [COVID-19 vaccination rollout phases](#).

Vidcast FAQs

During yesterday's vidcast with our acting Chief Executive Jackie Hanson, there were a few questions asked that we ran out of time to answer. I did however promise to answer them in my next message so here is a general recap:

1. What is the process for staff at TPCH who have severe allergies or anaphylaxis and wish to get vaccinated?

TPCH staff are assessed for allergies at the vaccination clinic. Anyone with allergies will not be immediately vaccinated and instead will be reviewed by an Immunisation Program Nurse. A medical officer also remotely supports all Metro North vaccination clinics. The medical officer reviews cases and provides advice on the best way for a person with a history of allergies or anaphylaxis to safely receive a vaccination.

2. Are you aware if there are plans to have public TV advertising for vaccine availability to cohorts and how to book in?

I have been advised that there is Commonwealth plans for wide advertising in relation to the re-set of the vaccination program in the very near future. In the meantime, people should speak to their GP about the appropriateness and timing of receiving a COVID-19 vaccination. GPs will be largely responsible for administering vaccinations to the general public. You can find the most up-to-date information about the national rollout at the [Department of Health COVID-19 vaccination website](#).

3. How will the general public be advised about when they can get vaccinated, without using the terms 1a, 1b, etc?

The Commonwealth is responsible for the timing of the rollout, including announcing any changes to the program. The Prime Minister recently announced that anyone who is over 50 will be eligible to receive the AstraZeneca vaccine from May onwards. For the latest information on the vaccine rollout visit the [Department of Health COVID-19 vaccination website](#).

4. Can elderly parents of the '1B staff group' get vaccinated now? Or is that later in the year? Is it just 1a at the moment?

Yes. Family members and household contacts of Metro North staff can now register to receive a vaccination through our website: <https://metronorth.health.qld.gov.au/vaccination>.

5. I was recently booked for the Pfizer vaccine (through the 134 COVID hotline) at the TPCH vaccination clinic. I was turned away on arrival, and staff commented this wasn't the first time this had occurred.

Our COVID-19 vaccinations website lists our clinic locations and which vaccine is available. At this time, TPCH does not have Pfizer vaccine available. We have advised 134 COVID hotline of our current clinics, capacity and the type of vaccines available. I would like to apologise for the inconvenience caused by this error.

6. The staff entrances are very high traffic areas. How often are these areas cleaned?

These areas are cleaned regularly to ensure we maintain high hygiene standards across our facilities. The frequency of cleaning is amended to match foot traffic and high touch area identification, with some areas cleaned as frequently as 'hourly', and others several times per day.

Thank you all for what you do every day to keep each other and our patients safe. I look forward to seeing you, your family members, your parents or your household contacts for vaccinations soon!

Regards,

Dr Liz Rushbrook
Metro North Incident Controller

Metro North Health – overview of cases*

HHS	Patients being managed by HHS						Fever Clinics			
	Total In-patients			Virtual Ward / HITH / or similar	Deaths **	Total cases managed by HHS (including recovered) ***	# of clinics	Presentations		
	ICU Pts		ICU-NOT Ventilated					ICU-Ventilated	Last 24 hrs	TOTAL ^
	ICU-NOT Ventilated	ICU-Ventilated								
MN	13	0	0	0	4	553	5	305	171322	
TOTAL										

*As at 29/4/2021 1000

**Metro North Health has four recorded deaths (one person a return traveller into NSW, who passed away in NSW)

*** These numbers reflect the cases being managed by Metro North Health.