

# Emergency Medicine COVID changes explained

When patients present to ED, their risk of COVID is initially unknown.

To best manage patient and staff safety, the Emergency Departments have implemented the following principles:

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## Triage streaming and zones

- Patients are streamed at triage to be **High Risk** or **Low Risk** according to an ED-screening tool.
- This separation relates to the physical capability of the zones to separate patients with respiratory symptoms and manage potential AGPs, not the likelihood of COVID-19.
- There are several implications:
  - There is **no such thing as NO-RISK** in the Emergency Department.
  - The **waiting room** has been divided into low- and high-risk zones.
  - The **low-risk zone** may still contain patients who meet testing criteria for COVID. In these cases, transmission is managed by excluding patients likely to contaminate the environment through respiratory symptoms or procedures, and by good staff hygiene & PPE.
  - **Transit routes** around the ED have changed to reduce workplace cross-contamination.
  - **Visitors** to the high-risk zone are restricted to clinical need and compassionate grounds.

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**In ED, ALL staff wear PPE for ALL patients**, with the minimum PPE for ALL direct patient care being:

- Surgical mask
- Visor
- Gloves
- Plastic apron

N95 masks and long-sleeve gowns are used in accordance with the WH PPE Guideline.

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## ALL patients are screened a further two times after triage

1. Screening against DHHS/WH testing criteria
  - If a patient meets criteria and is tested, they become 'suspected'. This does not mean they are automatically considered high-risk.
2. Risk stratification into high- risk and low-risk suspected cases
  - Patients tested for COVID are then screened for high-risk criteria according to the WH guidelines.
  - This stratification is then used to determine:
    - Single room or cohorting requirements on the ward, including SSU
    - PPE requirements for AGPs

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## Creating surge capacity

- To create capacity, the Emergency Observation Units have moved upstairs to 1B-SSU and 3A-SSU.
- Certain areas at each campus remain closed until required.
- As demand increases, areas will open and be reclassified according to risk.

### **For visiting teams: please**

1. Remember there is no such thing as NO-RISK in the ED.
2. Observe the signage with respect to transit routes, and ask if you are unsure.
3. Wear the same PPE as the ED staff, and present to the NIC if you require some.

