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What is this factsheet about?

At Western Health, the health and safety of our staff, patients, volunteers, visitors and community is our highest priority. This factsheet outlines Western Health's principles for minimizing COVID-19 transmission, and how we can translate these into everyday practice. The guidance in this factsheet will be continuously reviewed to ensure it aligns with Department of Health and the Chief Health Officer's advice.

Who should read this?

Western Health employees, volunteers, students, university partners and contractors.

What are Western Health's principles for minimizing COVID-19 transmission?

Principle 1: Keep your distance from others

Keeping your distance from others includes staff, volunteers, students, visitors and patients/consumers. Where possible:

- Keep 1.5 metres apart from others
- The maximum room occupancy should be determined where practicable, by the density quotient of **4 square metres** per person. Please note, the density quotient does not apply to clinical areas including emergency department waiting rooms and hospital wards
- Avoid unnecessary contact with other people e.g. do not shake hands, hug or kiss as a greeting
- Please speak up and seek advice from the COVID-19 Response or occupational health and safety team if you feel physical distancing is not being maintained in your work area. Further information can be found at www.worksafe.vic.gov.au and www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victoriasrestriction-levels-covid-19.

Principle 2: Maintain good hygiene

Stay safe by maintaining good hygiene. This includes (but is not limited to):

- Regularly maintain hand hygiene in accordance with the WHO 5 moments for hand hygiene
- Cough & sneeze into a tissue and place in a rubbish bin.

Principle 3: If you are unwell stay home

Please do not come to work if you are unwell

- All staff must complete the online Staff COVID-19 Symptom Check and Attendance Log before each shift to declare at the start of each shift and, if travelling across sites, before entry into each new site that they are free of COVID-19 risk factors
- If you have COVID-19 symptoms you should get tested at a COVID-19 Testing Clinic.

Principle 4: Keep yourself and your colleagues safe and informed

Keeping safe and informed is key to prevention of COVID-19 transmission,

- Keep yourself and your colleagues informed about COVID-19. For example, regularly review the QRGs and clinical guidance on the [Western Health Coronavirus Site](#)
- Wear personal protective equipment (PPE) which aligns with Western Health guidance
- Ensure you consider your level of risk and refer to the 'Vulnerable staff during COVID-19 pandemic' QRG and screening checklist to assess your risk. For those who meet the higher risk worker definition, redeployment may be required.

Principle 5: Keep the environment clean

Health Support Services provide high quality cleaning services throughout Western Health. In between scheduled cleaning, we need to continue to assist in reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmission through taking responsibility for cleaning and disinfecting high touch surfaces in our work spaces regularly e.g. phones, keyboards, door handles, light switches, bench tops.

How do these principles translate at Western Health?

In this section we detail how the Western Health's principles aiming to reduce COVID-19 transmission can be translated in day to day operation.

Patients & visitors

Visitors

Visitors play an important role in the health and wellbeing of patients receiving care at Western Health. Western Health has developed guidelines about how visitation may be facilitated safely during the COVID-19 pandemic. Stay up to date by referring to the 'Western Health Visitation Factsheet' on the [Western Health Coronavirus Site](#).

COVID-19 screening of patients and visitors & support people

- COVID-19 screening processes are in place at each main entry point and outpatient clinic entry point to screen incoming visitors, outpatients and support people. Stay up to date by referring to the 'Western Health Visitation Screening QRG' on the [Western Health Coronavirus Site](#).
- In addition to entry point screening, risk assessment for face to face appointments must be carried out prior to the appointment. Refer to the 'Outpatient and Home Visit Screening Tool' on the [Western Health Coronavirus Site](#) for COVID-19 screening questions.

Transportation - Vehicle ventilation

If transporting a patient in a hospital vehicle, if safe, have them seated in the back seat. Vehicle air-conditioning should be set to fresh air to optimise ventilation.



Clinical Care

Principle 1: Keep your distance from others

- Where possible, face to face outpatient consultation and investigations should only occur by exception and where absolutely necessary. Exemptions apply on a case by case basis
- A risk assessment/ COVID-19 screening must be carried out prior to face to face appointments. See 'COVID-19 screening of patients and visitors' section above for further information
- Telehealth is strongly recommended for consultations. However, please consider the patient's ability to participate in telehealth or telephone appointments and the nature of clinical care required
- Maintain at least 1.5 metres between patients and staff, noting that this rule does not apply to members of the same household. Where physical distancing cannot be maintained to enable provision of clinical care, for example during procedures or physical examinations, minimize time in close proximity
- Minimise any unnecessary additional people in the room (consultation rooms, patient rooms, procedure rooms, etc.)
- Provide consistent staffing for a patient or area, to limit the number of staff who come into contact with a given patient

Principle 2: Maintain good hygiene

- Increase access to hand hygiene products and encourage patients/clients and their support person to practice hand hygiene before and after each visit.

Principle 3: If unwell stay home

- Ensure all patients/ clients and visitors are aware not to attend scheduled specialist clinic appointments or procedures if they are unwell or present with any COVID-19 risk factors (as per Visitation QRG on the [Western Health Coronavirus Site](#). **Individuals should still attend hospitals if they are seeking emergency medical treatment**
- Review appointment letters to include any COVID-19 related restrictions e.g. do not attend if you have any COVID-19 symptoms; avoid coming to your appointment early.

Principle 4: Keep yourself and your colleagues safe and informed

- Use PPE as appropriate for the care or procedure being provided, ensuring that you have completed all relevant training
- Immediately notify your manager if you have cared for a COVID-19 suspected/confirmed patient and have **not** been wearing PPE as per Western Health guidelines

- Immediately notify your manager if you have been in contact with a COVID-19 suspected/confirmed person outside of the health service setting.

Principle 5: Keep the environment clean

- Staff should wipe down high touch surfaces and equipment between patients/clients.

All staff & students

Movement of health care workers

For guidance relating to the movement of health care workers please refer to the QRG titled 'Health Care Worker Movement during COVID-19' available on the [Western Health Coronavirus Site](#).

Ward rounds and multidisciplinary team (MDT) meetings

- Maintain physical distancing (1.5 metres distance) from patients/clients, family members/support people and staff
- Reduce the number of staff who enter a patient's rooms during handover and ward rounds. Consider IT solutions (e.g. virtual ward rounds; video enabled devices at the bedside) to limit physical numbers on ward rounds
- Consider review of pathology and radiology results in other areas to reduce congregation in clinical areas
- Hold MDT meetings as virtual meetings, as they tend to include staff from many departments and sites. Screens can be shared to share images such as medical imaging and pathology

Staff who test positive to COVID-19

Staff who test positive to COVID-19 must report as soon as practicable, to Western Health via the COVID-19 Staff Enquiries Helpdesk whscovid-19staffclinenquiries@wh.org.au.

Gatherings of staff for education and meetings

- Face to face education is only permitted with approval from ID/IP/COVID Response.
- In the first instance, training & education that can be provided via a non face-to-face method must be provided via a non face-to-face method
- Permitted face-to-face education should limit the number of attendees as far as possible. If staff are required to attend face-to-face training, they must wear appropriate PPE including face masks
- Face to face meetings are only permitted where essential for clinical care. Permitted face to face meetings should limit the number of attendees as far as possible and staff are required to wear appropriate PPE
- Meetings, interviews, performance reviews and other activities should be held via online platforms

- Where possible a density quotient of 1 person per 4m² for each room or enclosed space, and 1.5m physical distancing between staff members should be maintained.
- Outdoor spaces should be utilized where practicable for meetings/ training, to the extent that it does not compromise patient confidentiality
- Minimise face-to-face contact of critical senior staff (e.g. Divisional Directors, NUMs) to reduce the chance that both will be quarantined due to a single exposure
- Wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) to enable staff to safely perform duties and ensure appropriate training is provided
- When planning for a face to face gathering, the COVID-19 principles minimizing COVID-19 transmission should be abided by. A checklist (Appendix 1) is available for you to use to prepare for face to face gatherings.

Communal meals and work social events

Sharing of communal meals is not permitted. Any catering provided should be individually wrapped and portioned. No food or drink should be consumed in shared offices or clinical environments.

No social staff gatherings or events are permitted on Western Health sites at this time.

Industry representatives in theatre and observers

- At the current time, industry representatives and observers are not permitted unless essential to the provision of patient care.
- Record contact details for all visitors to the theatre suite on a log of attendance. This will enable contact tracing if this needs to occur. A template titled 'COVID-19 Room/ Space Log Sheet' is available on the [Western Health Coronavirus Site](#)
- Ask industry representatives and observers COVID-19 screening questions before the visit or at entry to Western Health to identify anyone who is unwell
- Ensure industry representatives and observers practice hand hygiene before and after each visit.

Student placements

Students make a valuable contribution to the health care sector and continuity of student clinical placements is important to the functioning of our health system and ensuring future workforce supply. Clinical placements of health students are permitted to continue under the current restrictions.

- All student clinical placement are restricted from high risk hospital work premises specifically the Emergency Departments, Intensive Care Units and SCOVID wards
- Students are not permitted to move between campuses/facilities during their placement
- All students should complete the online Staff COVID-19 Symptom Check and Attendance Log prior to beginning work
- Students should not be involved in the care of high risk suspected and confirmed COVID-19 patients. Where possible students should not be allocated to other patients with suspected COVID-19
- Any teaching or clinical placement activities that do not require patient contact should be undertaken outside of the health setting or via an alternative method such as videoconferencing or teleconferencing where possible

- Students are not eligible to undertake a clinical placement at a health service if they have undertaken a placement, worked or volunteered at a hotel quarantine site and/or other port of entry within the last 14 days.

For further information, please refer to the 'Student Clinical Placements and COVID-19' QRG on the [Western Health Coronavirus Site](#).

Environment

Work environments

Each separate work environment should be assessed to determine whether it meets the Western Health principles for reducing risk of COVID-19 transmission. Examples of different work environments include office spaces, meeting rooms, libraries, computer rooms and waiting areas. A checklist (Appendix 2) is available for you to use to assess each work environment and prepare the space to be COVID-19 safe.

Fans may increase the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Ensure fans are not used, and desk fans and fan heaters should be removed.

Break rooms

A QRG titled 'Use of Break Rooms and Rest Areas' has been developed and can be found on the [Western Health Coronavirus Site](#). The COVID-19 Response team, OH&S and the Infection Prevention team can provide additional advice where required.

Use of mobile phones and other electronic devices in healthcare settings

Mobile phones and other electronic devices such as laptops, touch-screens, remote controls, mouse and keyboards are potential vectors for contamination and transmission of virus:

- These devices should not be taken into clinical areas unless absolutely necessary.
- Ensure mobile phones and other electronic devices are cleaned and disinfected regularly (particularly after use in COVID-19 suspected/ positive areas) following the manufacturer's instructions. If no manufacture guidance is available, consider the use of detergent/ disinfectant wipes or alcohol-base wipes contacting at least 70% alcohol. Further information, including cleaning of screens is available at <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/preventing-infection-workplace-covid-19#how-to-clean-and-disinfect-after-a-coronavirus-covid-19-case-in-the-workplace>
- Ensure hand hygiene is performed before and after using mobile phone and other electronic devices
- Do not use or answer mobile phones when you are wearing personal protective equipment
- Avoid sharing mobile phones, headphones or ear pods of any kind.

References

This guidance document is based on the following resources:

Directions from Chief Health Officer in accordance with emergency powers arising from declared state of emergency: Workplace Directions (No 21). Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (Vic) Section 200. Retrieved from: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorias-restriction-levels-covid-19>

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<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/communicating-with-frontline-staff-in-health-services-covid-19-doc>



Appendix 1: Face to face gathering checklist

Please complete this checklist for each face to face gathering. Resources such as posters and signage can be found [here](#). Please ensure posters and signage are printed in colour and laminated if placed in clinical areas.

Actions	Check when completed ✓
Principle 1: Keep your distance from others	
Ensure the number of people attending your face to face gathering does not exceed the density quotient of the space	
Position chairs 1.5 metres apart	
Abide by table signage which indicates how many staff may sit at each table	
Prepare a log sheet to record attendee names, mobile numbers & start and finish time attended. A log sheet template titled ' COVID-19 Room/ Space Log Sheet ' is available on the Western Health Coronavirus Site . Completed log sheets should be stored by the facilitator for 6 weeks	
Principle 2: Maintain good hygiene	
Ensure alcohol-based hand rub is available for staff to complete hand hygiene (before, and after the session, and during the session as required)	
Principle 5: Keep the environment clean	
Ensure Clinell wipes are available for staff to use to clean shared surfaces	
Prior to and after the gathering, clean and disinfect high touch surfaces with Clinell wipes or equivalent cleaning products e.g. chair arms, door handles, light switches, bench tops, kitchen appliances	
Discourage consumption of food in the space. Ensure any catering is individually wrapped and portioned.	

Appendix 2: Environmental checklist

Please complete this checklist for each separate space¹ in your area. Resources such as posters and signage can be found [here](#). Please ensure posters and signage are printed in colour and laminated if placed in clinical areas.

Actions	Check when completed ✓
Principle 1: Keep your distance from others	
Calculate the density quotient ² for the space you are assessing (e.g. waiting room, office space).	
Colour print a density quotient ² poster, laminate and visibly display in the space (e.g. on the door/ wall)	
Ensure the number of chairs available reflect the density quotient ² . Remove excess chairs or label chairs which should not be used	
Position chairs 1.5 metres apart - consider the need to reconfigure seating and workstation placement to adhere to physical distancing 1.5m apart & to ensure people are not facing each other. Consider the use of partitions if staff facing each other cannot be avoided	
Signage should be placed on shared tables indicating how many staff may sit at each table (1.5 metres apart)	
Reception areas only: Consider installation of Perspex screens in reception areas	
Consider a room booking process and instruct people where to wait to minimise congregation of people in corridors	
Principle 2: Maintain good hygiene	
Set up alcohol-based hand rub station/s for staff and consumers	
Consider colour printing, laminating and displaying signage for 'hygiene stations' at alcohol-based hand rub station/s	
Waiting rooms only: Set up hygiene stations in waiting rooms, equipped with signage, alcohol hand rub and tissues. Keep tissues replenished and ensure rubbish bins are available for tissue disposal	
Consider displaying appropriate signage demonstrating physical distancing and for respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/promotional-material-coronavirus-covid-19	
Principle 5: Keep the environment clean	
Set up hygiene station/s with Clinell wipes or equivalent cleaning products for staff to use	

Consider colour printing, laminating and displaying 'Thank you for...' signage where Clinell wipes/ equivalent cleaning products have been set up, to remind staff to wipe down shared workstations before and after use

Ensure desk fans and fan heaters are removed

Install non touch options where possible e.g. non touch water fountains

¹ A separate space means a space separated by permanent structures.

² The number of people allowed within a single space to comply with the density requirements. To calculate a density quotient, divide the total accessible area measured in square metres, by 4 (& rounded down).