

COVID-19

RURAL AND REMOTE RESPONSE

INFECTION CONTROL: BASIC HINTS FOR YOUR PRACTICE

PATIENT APPOINTMENTS

- Opt for telehealth where possible. Please note it is important to retain in-person appointments for patients who require a physical examination & diagnostic tests.
- No patient should attend the practice without phoning ahead first – this will enable your practice to assess whether a telehealth consult is appropriate for them, or for patients who are concerned they may have COVID-19, enable the practice to prepare in advance to assess them.
 - Do you have a sign outside the entrance of your practice or on the door to alert patients not to attend without an appointment, or to phone ahead?
- Consider having patients wait in their car and texting them once the doctor is ready to see them.

WAITING ROOMS

- Remove all unnecessary items from waiting rooms.
 - This includes toys, magazines, books, brochures etc.
 - Provide patients with handouts of health-related information (distribute individually to patients, do not put on display). Remove any handouts left behind by patients and dispose of them in the rubbish.
- Chairs in the waiting rooms
 - Opt for plastic or vinyl covered chairs – while they may not be the most comfortable choice, practices need to be regularly cleaning all high touch surfaces. Any chair that has a tear (even if small) should be removed from your waiting room.
- All signage/posters should be limited to laminated versions only. If you can't clean it don't use it.
- Space out the chairs for social distancing, or if they are joined together, place 'do not sit' signs (laminated) on as many chairs as needed to ensure patients are sitting at least 1.5 metres apart.

FRONT RECEPTION

- Place hand sanitizer on the front counter or at the door for patients to use as they enter and exit the practice.
- Encourage patients to use the 'tap and go' option on EFTPOS.
 - Put up a sign about this at reception (recommend a laminated one so it can be cleaned).
 - Clean the EFTPOS machine between every use.
- Phones, computer keyboards and front counters should be cleaned regularly.
- Ask patients and visitors to the practice to stand 1.5m from the counter at reception.
 - Use tape markings on the floor, or
 - Put a table in front of the reception desk to physically prevent people from stepping right up to the counter.

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CLINIC ROOMS

- Must be cleaned down between patients – desk surfaces, chairs, phone, keyboard, any clinical equipment used during consultation.
- Remove all clutter and paper-based items from desks, walls etc.
- Chairs should be a hard and/or wipeable surface - eg. plastic, vinyl or leather.
- Beds – use disposable linen/paper and change after each patient. In addition, clean the bed after each patient.

CLOTHING AND PPE

- Ensure all staff are familiar with the correct donning and removal of PPE, and that it is used as per the recommended guidelines (see below).
- Alternatives to standard issue PPE – these must be reviewed by a clinician with Infection Control expertise, to advise on efficacy, cleaning and sterilization requirements.
- Gloves are not recommended for front counter staff - lots of hand washing is preferred.

CLEANING

- Undertake a thorough, deep clean of all clinic rooms, reception area, staff amenities and waiting room at the end of each day.
- Waste disposal – must be compliant with RACGP Practice Standards.
- For information on which products to use and where, the Department of Health has released this guideline:
<https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/03/environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection-principles-for-covid-19.pdf>

References:

- Commonwealth Department of Health - COVID-19 Infection Control Online Education Module
https://www.health.gov.au/news/how-to-protect-yourself-and-the-people-you-are-caring-for-from-infection-with-covid-19?utm_source=agedcareonline
- Commonwealth Department of Health - COVID-19 PPE Use Information
<https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/03/interim-advice-on-non-inpatient-care-of-persons-with-suspected-or-confirmed-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-including-use-of-personal-protective-equipment-ppe.pdf>
- For detailed information on General Practice Infection Control -
<https://www.racgp.org.au/FSDEDEV/media/documents/Running%20a%20practice/Practice%20standards/Infection-prevention-and-control.pdf>