



## SHMC COVID-19 Position Statement

Published on March 17, 2020

Position Statement, Policies and Procedures regarding Coronavirus (COVID-19)

This document is based on advice and policies from the Australian Physiotherapy Association, The World Health Organisation and the Department of Health.

The World Health Organisation has declared the coronavirus (COVID-19) a pandemic requiring a global coordinated effort. There is currently no vaccine available for this new virus and symptoms can include fever, flu-like symptoms such as coughing, sore throat and fatigue and/or shortness of breath.

SHMC is taking action immediately, following advice from The Australian Physiotherapy Association:

- SHMC has and will continue to discuss a plan of action with staff and colleagues. This document has been emailed to all staff and contractors.
- SHMC ensures that all clinical and non-clinical staff have a good understanding of infection control principles. Non-clinical staff at SHMC are taught infection control policies upon their induction and onboarding process.
- SHMC staff have been informed of the signs of coronavirus and are encouraged to monitor themselves and their families, their patients and those they come into contact with in the community. Symptoms can range from mild illness to pneumonia. Some people will recover easily, and others may get very sick very quickly. People with coronavirus may experience fever, flu-like symptoms such as coughing, sore throat and fatigue and shortness of breath.
- SHMC has sourced the recommended posters from the APA and the Department of Health today, and these have been provided to staff to display at our clinics from Monday 16.3.2020.
- SHMC staff have been advised to discuss with patient options of reconsidering/delaying treatment if they have flu like symptoms or have travelled to internationally known hot spots in recent weeks. Patients booking appointments by phone will be advised of this.
- We endeavour to have a supply of masks available in our clinics. We have used our supply of masks and have ordered more.

- Use preventative measures to limit the spread of virus. SHMC continues to comply with our regular infection control policy, as well as increasing the scope and frequency of cleaning and sanitising regimes. The procedures we follow are outlined in the document: Information on Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Principles, which can be accessed in full at: <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/03/environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection-principles-for-covid-19.pdf>. All SHMC staff have been provided with this document.

### **How can I individually reduce transmission?**

Practising good hand and sneeze/cough hygiene is the best defence against most viruses. You should:

- wash your hands frequently with soap and water, before and after eating, and after going to the toilet
- cover your cough and sneeze, dispose of tissues, and use alcohol-based hand sanitiser
- and if unwell, avoid contact with others (stay more than 1.5 metres from people).

### **How SHMC will protect our clinics from coronavirus outbreaks**

**Cancellation policy** – The SHMC cancellation policy will be suspended until 30.06.2020.

#### **Before attendance**

We have developed a system, prior to attendance (phone call/SMS), to ask patients whether they've been to high risk countries or have had close contact with a person with confirmed COVID-19 while infectious, in the 14 days before the scheduled appointment.

#### **If the patient meets the above criteria we will:**

- reschedule the appointment for as soon as possible after the 14 day exclusion
- remind patients they are to self-isolate at home for 14 days after they departed from high risk countries or if they have had close contact with a person with confirmed COVID-19 while infectious
- remind them they are advised to practice social distancing if they have been overseas to a country other than high risk countries in the last 14 days
- remind them if they develop respiratory symptoms or fever to call their local GP.

The person who will assess whether or not it's safe to defer the patient appointment will be Practice Manager: Janine Wallis

Business Principals: Rob Wallis & Andris Simsons

#### **During attendance**

Implementation of options to identify patients in the clinic waiting room, including waiting room posters, asking patients at reception whether they have been to or transited through counties listed as high risk in the last 14 days or have had close contact with a person with confirmed COVID-19 while infectious, in the previous 14 days.

**For patients who meet the above criteria:**

- SHMC will reschedule any non-urgent consultations until after the 14 self-isolation period.
- For urgent needs, patients will be provided details of other available health services or referred to the public hospital system.
- For patients who meet the above criteria and who report symptoms, we will refer the patient to their local general practitioner.

Source: NSW Health COVID-19: Interim guidance for elective surgery and outpatient clinics

**Can SHMC refuse treatment of patients, especially those who have been Coronavirus hot spots??**

It is reasonable to screen any patients or staff on the basis of known coronavirus infection criteria including physical symptoms and travel to identified 'hot spots'.

On the basis of this information, SHMC may request a patient delay attendance for 14 days or, until no longer symptomatic. For further information, refer to AHPRA Code of Conduct for Registered Health Practitioners Section 2.4, page 4.

**What will SHMC do if there is a patient or employee with a suspected case of coronavirus?**

As advised by the Australian Physiotherapy Association, we will refer to the Department of Health Fact Sheet for information with dealing suspected coronavirus cases. This can be accessed at: <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>

We will also contact the healthdirect helpline on 1800 022 222 to speak with a registered nurse from the Department of Health to access the most recent advice.

**Use of face masks**

With the emergence of COVID-19 across many countries, there is a global shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE), including surgical masks and P2/N95 respirators. As a first step in releasing PPE from the National Medical Stockpile, the Australian Government has provided a limited supply of surgical masks (1,125,000) and P2/N95 respirators (27,200) for general practices (including Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services) and community pharmacies with a demonstrated need.

There is no need for the general public or health workers to wear masks unless they are dealing with symptomatic patients. Further guidance on the use of surgical masks can be found at [www.health.gov.au/covid19-health-professionals](http://www.health.gov.au/covid19-health-professionals).

Should staff or patients choose to wear a face mask during work hours or while attending our clinics, they will be supported in this decision.

## **Management of Suspected Cases**

To date, we have not experienced a suspected case of coronavirus in our staff or patient population. Should this occur, we will follow the advice from the Department of Health and the Australian Physiotherapy Association:

For people with a suspected case

- Information sheet for people with symptoms
- Isolation guidance

For travellers

- Information sheet for travellers, including isolation requirements
- Isolation guidance

- ❖ This document is subject to change. Staff and stakeholders will be notified of amendments.