

Hamilton Medical Centre

COVID-19 Policy Information for Patients

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Document Control

Date	Version No.	Description of Updates	Person Making Changes	Person Authorising Changes
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Hamilton Medical Centre – COVID-19 Policy

Purpose

This policy provides guidance for the patients of Hamilton Medical Centre regarding the management of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Definition – Sourced from WHO

COVID-19 is a disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus. 'CO' stands for corona, 'VI' for virus, and 'D' for disease. Formerly, this disease was referred to as '2019 novel coronavirus' or '2019-nCoV.

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus.

Most people infected with the COVID-19 virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are more likely to develop serious illness.

The best way to prevent and slow down transmission is be well informed about the COVID-19 virus, the disease it causes and how it spreads. Protect yourself and others from infection by washing your hands or using an alcohol-based rub frequently and not touching your face.

The COVID-19 virus spreads primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes, so it's important that you also practice respiratory etiquette (for example, by coughing into a flexed elbow).

At this time, there are no specific vaccines or treatments for COVID-19. However, there are many ongoing clinical trials evaluating potential treatments. WHO will continue to provide updated information as soon as clinical findings become available.

Background and rationale

The following policies apply to all patients of Hamilton Medical Centre. Patient, staff and doctor safety is the number one priority for Hamilton Medical Centre. Hamilton Medical Centre is responsible in ensuring all patients, staff and doctors follow the policies of the practice and also the legal requirements as set by the Australian Government, the NSW Government and NSW Health. Should a patient be in breach of any of the policies set by Hamilton Medical Centre, or any of the above agencies, you will be asked to seek your primary health care needs elsewhere.

Risk Minimisation Strategies

Hamilton Medical Centre has implemented strategies as recommended by Public Health to minimise risk to employees, contractors, patients, visitors and the wider community. Strategies include:

- 1) Controlling access to the practice. The main doors of the practice are to restricted access only to approved patients. Approved patients are those with booked face to face appointments.
- 2) Restricting the number of patients in the practice at any time. Only allowing the patient in the practice for a face to face appointment – no partners or children. Carers and translators excepted. Maximum capacity stickers placed around the practice and on each consultation door.
- 3) Enforcing physical distancing regulations. Tape lines marked 1.5m from each clinician's desk and from the reception desk. Waiting room seating reduced and marked with stickers to indicate where to sit. Sneeze guards installed around the entire reception desk.
- 4) Increased cleaning of the practice. Deep cleans are performed each night with extra cleans available throughout the day when necessary. All areas are equipped with cleaning and sanitising products.
- 5) Heightened infection control procedures. This document outlines the increased infection control measures we have taken to proactively manage the COVID-19 pandemic. It will continue to be updated when updates are received by NSW Public Health.

Procedures

Triage

When you contact our practice, you will be asked COVID-19 screening questions. This is to ensure we can provide you with the best advice available at the time. These screening questions will be asked in the following instances:

- 1) By reception – when you book a face to face appointment over the phone
- 2) By reception – when you present to the practice for a face to face appointment
- 3) By the GP/Nurse – before you enter a consultation room
- 4) By the GP/Nurse – when you are offered a face to face appointment

These are the current screening questions. They are subject to change based on updated advice from Public Health. It is very important you answer truthfully.

- 1) Do you have any of the following symptoms:
 - i. Cough
 - ii. Fever
 - iii. Sore throat
 - iv. Difficulty breathing
 - v. Loss of sense of smell
 - vi. Loss of sense of taste
 - vii. Diarrhoea

- 2) Have you travelled to the following locations in the past 14 days:
 - i. Overseas
 - ii. Victoria
 - iii. Sydney
 - iv. Port Stephens
 - v. East Maitland

- 3) If no to the above, have you had close contact with anyone that has?

If you answer yes to ANY of the above questions, our reception team will advise you on the appropriate steps to take.

Appointments

Please take special note of the following:

- 1) **We request that you do not attend the practice unless you have booked a face to face appointment. If you do this, you will be asked to go home and phone us.**
- 2) **We request that you do not attend the practice to collect prescriptions, referrals or other documents; these will be sent to you either electronically or via post. If you do this, you will be advised on the method your documents were sent to you and will not be permitted to enter the practice.**
- 3) **We request that if you are attending the practice for a face to face appointment, that you phone the practice when you arrive at the lift. Our staff will ask you screening questions and will tell you when you are able to enter the practice.**
- 4) **Masks, or suitable face coverings, are required to be worn at all times while in the practice.**
- 5) **Social distancing is to be maintained at all times while in the practice.**
- 6) **It is important that you follow any instructions to self-isolate if you are waiting for your COVID-19 test results. Information on how to correctly do this will be given to you at the time of your appointment.**
- 7) **If at any time you do not comply with staff instructions, you will be asked to go home and phone us, and you will not be permitted to enter the practice.**

▪ Telehealth Appointments

Telehealth appointments are the standard appointment to be booked for all patients, unless your GP has specifically stated otherwise. During this appointment, you will be triaged by your GP and if clinically indicated, you can then be allocated a face to face appointment. If you do not require a face to face appointment, any referrals, prescriptions or other paperwork you have requested cannot be collected in person. Instead, they will be:

- 1) Posted or emailed to you
- 2) Faxed or emailed to your pharmacy
- 3) Faxed or emailed to a pathology collection centre

▪ Face to Face Appointments

Face to face appointments are to only be booked once approved by the treating GP during a telehealth appointment, or unless the GP has specifically stated otherwise. These appointments must only be given to those patients for whom it is clinically indicated and have passed the screening questions (see above). If the screening questions have revealed a suspected COVID-19 case, you will be referred to a public health screening clinic. The most appropriate action for you to take will be decided by your GP.

During your face to face appointment, all staff and doctors that you see will be wearing personal protective equipment (PPE). You will also be advised at the time of booking to wear a mask or suitable covering when in the practice. If you don't have access to a surgical mask, a suitable covering may include a scarf or hanky folded over. Your temperature will be taken when you enter the practice.

We ask that you attend your appointment alone to minimise any risks. If you require a carer to help with mobility or communication, please discuss this with staff when making your appointment. We kindly request that no children be brought along to appointments unless they are the patient. If the appointment is for a child, we request that only one parent or caregiver attends with the child. Children under 12 years of age are not required to wear a mask.

▪ Face to Face Appointments with a suspected COVID-19 case

As required by NSW Health, all suspected COVID-19 cases must be referred for testing to the screening clinics and must be advised to self-isolate until a negative result occurs. If a face to face appointment is still required, the practice will implement additional Infection Control procedures. You may be asked to wait in your car until the

doctor is ready to see you, or you may be taken into an empty room to wait for your doctor. It is important that you touch as little as possible. Your temperature will be taken when you enter the practice.

It is important that you follow any instructions to self-isolate while you wait for your test results. Information on how to correctly do this will be given to you at the time of your appointment.

It is critical to the health and safety of practice staff, GPs, patients, visitors and the community that the entire practice adheres to these policies. To not do so is considered a breach of this policy and of Public Health requirements and will be treated seriously.