

*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
30/07/2020	1.0	Created	Melissa Neave	Melissa Neave
15/04/2021	1.1	Travel locations, practice entry requirements, no mask required, prescription delivery method	Melissa Neave	Melissa Neave
28/06/2021	1.2	Symptom added – headache, Masks to be worn	Melissa Neave	Melissa Neave
21/12/2021	1.3	WHO definition	Melissa Neave	Melissa Neave
27/06/22	1.4	Risk Minimisation Strategies, Triage and Appointment Protocols	Melissa Neave	Melissa Neave

# 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

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Most people infected with the virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. However, some will become seriously ill and require medical attention. Older people and those with underlying medical conditions like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, or cancer are more likely to develop serious illness. Anyone can get sick with COVID-19 and become seriously ill or die at any age.

The best way to prevent and slow down transmission is to be well informed about the disease and how the virus spreads. Protect yourself and others from infection by staying at least 1 metre apart from others, wearing a properly fitted mask, and washing your hands or using an alcohol-based rub frequently. Get vaccinated when it's your turn and follow local guidance.

The virus can spread from an infected person's mouth or nose in small liquid particles when they cough, sneeze, speak, sing or breathe. These particles range from larger respiratory droplets to smaller aerosols. It is important to practice respiratory etiquette, for example by coughing into a flexed elbow, and to stay home and self-isolate until you recover if you feel unwell.

## 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. Ensuring we do not exceed maximum capacity per 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, including implantation of air filters and air circulation protocols.

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 Hot Doc – when you book an appointment online
- 3) By reception – when you present to the practice for a face to face appointment
- 4) By the GP/Nurse – before you enter a consultation room
- 5) 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
  - viii. Headache
- 2) Have you tested positive to COVID-19 in the previous 14 days?
- 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) Our staff will ask you screening questions when you enter the practice.
- 4) Social distancing is to be maintained at all times while in the practice.
- 5) 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.
- 6) 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 can be booked freely unless your GP has specifically stated otherwise. During this appointment, you will be triaged by your GP and if clinically indicated, you can be allocated 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
- 4) Sent via SMS/email if ePrescription

### ▪ Face to Face Appointments

Face to face appointments can be booked freely unless your GP has specifically stated otherwise. If at any point 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 may be wearing personal protective equipment (PPE). **At this time, you are required to wear a mask while in the practice. This mask must be medical grade and disposable, fabric masks are not permitted.**

We ask that where possible, 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.

### ▪ 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.