



Distribution of gowns through Primary Health Networks

Addendum to Tranche 4. Gowns for general practices in areas of COVID-19 community transmission in Victoria, including Aboriginal Controlled Community Health Services¹

Guidance on the supply of gowns for general practices, from the National Medical Stockpile (NMS) through Primary Health Networks (PHNs). This includes Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services.

17 July 2020

This guidance ensures consistent and transparent management of the supply of gowns to general practices from the National Medical Stockpile. This includes Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service areas in Victoria facing critical supply constraints AND substantially increased risk of exposure to COVID-19.

Eligibility to access gowns

GP Respiratory Clinics and general practices, including Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS).

As supplies are limited, PHNs manage the distribution of gowns to practices with demonstrated need, including:

- where there is no commercial alternative supply available and lack of gowns is preventing practices from assessing and/or testing patients
- where practices have a population more likely to have been exposed to COVID-19 (e.g. practices in defined areas of increased transmission)
- where practices have a high number of patients presenting with respiratory symptoms.

Please note: PHNs are now able to distribute stocks to:

- after-hours GP home visiting services
- Medical Deputising Services (MDS)
- Nurse practitioner owned or led primary care practices in their area.

Intended use of gowns

A risk assessment, based on the patient's presenting condition determines whether personal protective equipment (PPE) should be used. In the current context, when considering PPE for COVID-19 specifically, gowns (along with gloves, masks and eye protection) are recommended in the following situations:

- **for clinical consultation and physical examination of patients in quarantine and/or who may have COVID-19. This includes those presenting with fever and/or acute respiratory illness (or other clinically compatible illness) who live in areas of higher**

transmission.¹ All PPE, including gowns, should be removed after a consultation where there has been close physical contact with a symptomatic patient

- **for specimen collection from a suspect or confirmed COVID-19 case, if close physical contact with a symptomatic patient or splash/spray of body substances is anticipated.** If worn, a gown can be worn for specimen collections from consecutive patients in the same location. It must be changed if it becomes visibly contaminated and removed when leaving the immediate area to avoid contaminating other environments.

For further guidance on use of PPE in non-inpatient settings, please visit:

<https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/05/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-use-of-personal-protective-equipment-ppe-in-non-inpatient-health-care-settings-during-the-covid-19-outbreak.pdf>.

Where GPs are unable to undertake appropriate contact and droplet precautions for clinical assessment and specimen collection, they should refer cases to appropriate collection centres or Emergency Departments.

Gowns distributed through PHNs **cannot be sold as commercial stock**.

Quantities

Primary Health Networks have the flexibility to determine allocation of gowns per practice. This should take into account practice size and need; including the number of patients the practice is likely to assess and test.

This means that higher numbers should be allocated to:

- GPRCs, and GPs/ACCHS situated in areas of higher need
- where there is a lack of availability of other services.

More information

For the latest advice, information and resources, go to www.health.gov.au

Call the **National Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080**. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you require translating or interpreting services, call 131 450.

The phone number of each state or territory public health agency is available at www.health.gov.au/state-territory-contacts

¹ See <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-covid-19-daily-update> for up to date epidemiological information on areas of COVID-19 community transmission in Victoria
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