

Dear Colleagues

I would like to acknowledge the enormous contribution that general practitioners have made during the COVID-19 response and I thank you for your ongoing support of the pandemic response.

We now face a significant challenge with rapidly increasing COVID-19 case numbers related to circulation of the Omicron variant. It is anticipated that contacting and managing all positive cases by telephone will become more difficult. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to advise you that we are making some changes to the way we manage COVID-19 cases in the community.

NSW Health will still screen all COVID-19 cases for certain risk factors and escalate those with known higher risk for increased support. Certain other risk factors such as pregnancy and obesity, may not be identified through the routine screening process. Cases that meet the criteria for low-risk will be advised to undertake self-care at home in the first instance.

It is highly likely that your usual patients will call for advice regarding COVID-19 symptoms and issues relating to non COVID-19 matters during their acute phase of illness. General practitioners are asked to continue to provide the usual care and support of their patients for non-COVID-19 matters via telehealth. For any COVID-19 matters, please refer to the RACGP COVID-19 Management in the Community guidelines and your local HealthPathway guidelines.

From Friday, 17 December:

Confirmed COVID-19 cases who meet certain criteria will be provided information to safely manage their infection at home. The criteria for classifying a case as low-risk are:

1. under 50 years of age
2. have had two doses of COVID-19 vaccine
3. do not suffer from any chronic medical conditions
4. non-Indigenous.

Chronic medical conditions include:

- o obesity (BMI >30 kg/m²)
- o diabetes
- o severe, chronic or complex medical conditions (including cardiac, respiratory, renal or neurodevelopmental conditions)
- o immunocompromised including malignancy
- o severe mental illness.

Low-risk cases will be given a web link providing advice on how to self-manage at home. [Confirmed cases of COVID-19 - Fact sheets \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)

- Patients who meet the low-risk criteria on screening will be provided a contact number to seek further medical assistance. Any patient who has a chronic medical condition, **or who is pregnant** (which may not be identified through the screening process), should be escalated for additional support.
- Patients will be advised to call their GP or the NSW Health Support Line on 1800 960 933 if they have any mild symptoms or questions, and to call Triple Zero (000) if it is a medical emergency.
- If a GP would like to escalate a patient for additional support they can call the NSW Health COVID-19 Care at Home Support Line on 1800 960 933

- Patients will receive an automated medical clearance notice from NSW Health allowing them to cease isolation 10 days after their positive test date.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you again for your dedication and support as we face this evolving COVID-19 situation. I highly value the contribution from general practitioners, and I look forward to continuing to work together as we respond to the pandemic.

Yours sincerely



Dr Kerry Chant PSM
Chief Health Officer and Deputy Secretary Population and Public Health
17 December 2021

What does the SMS say?

Dear NAME

This is an official message from NSW Health

You have recently tested POSITIVE for COVID-19.

If you are under 50 years of age, have had two doses of COVID-19 vaccine and do not suffer from any chronic medical illnesses (listed below). You are at low risk of serious illness and may be able to self-care at home. Most children under 16 years can be safely managed at home, even if not COVID-19 vaccinated.

If this is incorrect or, you are pregnant, please call 1800 960 933, so we can link you in with a health service.

If you have mild symptoms, concerns, or questions, you can call your GP.

If you have a health emergency or are feeling breathless, chest pain or are fainting please call Triple Zero (000) immediately.

For all COVID-19 related information [Fact sheets - Confirmed cases of COVID-19](#)

*Medical risk factors include

- Obesity
- Severe, chronic or complex medical conditions (including cardiac, respiratory, renal or neurodevelopmental)
- Diabetes
- Immunocompromised including malignancy
- Severe mental illness