



16 February 2022

System Alert and Response

As discussed at HEC, and given the rise of locally acquired cases to over 100 cases per day, the following changes to SAR should now come into force:

- Effective tomorrow, 17 February 2022, the following regions will move to full AMBER on SAR:
 - Perth/Peel
 - South West
 - Wheatbelt
 - Great Southern
 - The implementation of AMBER will commence tomorrow and is to be fully in place by COB on 22 February 2022 (next Tuesday).
- Effective tomorrow, 17 February 2022, the following regions will move to interim AMBER on SAR:
 - Pilbara
 - The implementation of Interim AMBER in the Pilbara will commence tomorrow, 17 February 2022 and is to be fully in place by 21 February 2022.
 - Pilbara will move to full AMBER on Monday 28 February.
- As communicated previously, the following regions will move to Interim AMBER on SAR on 21 February 2022:
 - Kimberley
 - Mid-West
 - Goldfields
 - These regions to will move to full AMBER on Monday 28 February 2022

Staff should familiarise themselves with the [System and Alert Response Framework's](#) full Amber requirements.

The distribution of Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) continues throughout Western Australian, in readiness for the transition, with over 10 million now in stock.

Updated COVID-19 visitor guidelines

Updated [COVID-19 visitor guidelines](#) for public hospitals and health services are now available.

A working group comprising HSP clinical staff, HSP Infectious Disease physicians, Public Health team members and Infection Protection and Control staff have informed the changes which address different essential visitor scenarios in an operational context.

Key updates are summarised below:

Essential visitor definitions

Health Care Workers and Health Support Workers are out of scope. Additional definitions are provided in Appendix Four of the guidelines.

Visitor mask exemptions

It is recommended that any visitor with a mask exemption, especially if they are also unvaccinated, undertake a supervised RAT at every visit, unless they have proof of a negative PCR within the last 24 hours.

Staff should also:

- check the mask exemption validity. This needs to come from their regular GP/Specialist. Online interstate approvals will generally not be accepted.
- offer a shield or visor for the person to wear if possible
- pre-arrange visiting times for exempt visitors where possible
- ensure all other standard procedures are followed, i.e.:
 - perform entry questionnaire for clinical and epidemiological risk factors
 - perform hand hygiene before entry
 - escort the visitor to and from the patient's room
 - ensure no other person shares a lift with the visitor
 - move the patient to a single room with air purifier and HEPA filter if possible, with door closed
 - ensure the visitor physically distances from staff as much as possible
 - ensure the visitor does not leave the patient's room, other than for bathroom visits (that is, no visits to catering facilities or communal meal areas).

Visitor time limits are at the discretion of the hospital and may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Note: the advice above applies to unvaccinated visitors with and without valid vaccination exemptions.

Unvaccinated visitors residing in hospital accommodation

It is recommended that unvaccinated visitors living in hospital accommodation have a RAT every second day in addition to regular screening for clinical and epidemiological risk factors.

New COVID-19 positive visitor exemption for end-of-life patients

Under exceptional circumstances, HSP CEs (or rostered delegates) may grant permission to approve a short, ushered visit on compassionate grounds for a confirmed, or probable COVID-19 case to visit a person at end of life. This will be subject to risk assessments to the health service site, workforce and individual circumstances.

Visitor age limit

Where possible, children are discouraged from visiting patients.

Elective surgery bookings extended

Western Australian public hospitals will continue to book same and multi-day non-urgent Category 2 and Category 3 elective surgeries for an additional 2 weeks as Omicron COVID-19 cases remain steady.

As previously outlined, the surgery schedule would be reviewed ahead of the commencement of the temporary pause to some surgeries, based on Omicron COVID-19 case numbers and advice from the Chief Health Officer.

The temporary scale down on non-urgent same and multi-day elective surgery is now set to commence on March 14 at all WA public hospitals, and on March 21 at some larger private hospitals.

There is no change to Category 1 bookings and the surgery schedule for these will continue as normal.

COVID-19 webinar series

All WA health system staff are invited to weekly COVID-19 update webinars with the Director General, Chief Health Officer and other senior health executives.

Webinars are scheduled each week on Tuesdays – visit the [Health Point home page](#) to access the MS Teams invitation as times may vary.

[Yesterday's webinar](#) featured a presentation from special guest Dr David Speers, PathWest QEII Head of Department Microbiology, Infectious Diseases Physician and Clinical Microbiologist, covering the emergence of the Omicron variant and the future of COVID-19.

Recordings of [previous webinars](#) are also available.

Personal Protective Equipment

All staff, both clinical and non-clinical, are reminded that they must wear a surgical mask on entry into any WA healthcare facility, including all hospitals, outpatient, aged care, community health and hospital in the home services.

If staff are on a meal break or using shared break areas such as lunch and tea rooms, masks must still be worn unless eating or drinking.

N95 masks are mandatory in all emergency department areas.

Masks should also be worn for no more than 4 hours, and changed earlier if they become soiled, moist or damaged.

[An instructional video](#) on the appropriate method of donning and doffing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is also available as a handy reminder to staff.

Reminder to get tested

Staff who are colleagues of a positive case should check whether they meet the new definition of a [close contact](#), and then follow the [testing and isolation protocols](#).

If you test positive via a Rapid Antigen Test, [register it online](#) and tell your manager and follow the isolation protocols.

Oral antivirals provisionally available

A recent shipment of oral antiviral medications deployed from the Commonwealth National Medical Stockpile has arrived in Western Australia.

The new products, molnupiravir (Lagevrio®) and nirmatrelvir plus ritonavir (Paxlovid®), are in addition to those previously available, providing more potential treatment options for eligible COVID patients.

As with other National Medical Stockpile COVID-19 treatments, these medicines are currently only provisionally registered by the TGA, and local guidelines are being finalised for the requesting and approval process. Clinician resources and patient consent forms are also being developed.

Supply is currently limited and allocations are determined at the Commonwealth's discretion.

Public health update

Further to the outbreak at Juniper Residential Aged Care in Bentley last week, 2 more aged care facilities in Mandurah have recorded cases, including an outbreak at Brightwater's The Cove aged care facility.

The care and wellbeing of all residents and staff across each of the residential aged care facilities are being closely monitored.

More than 30 schools are also impacted by current COVID-19 outbreaks. The Department of Health continues to work with the Department of Education and affected schools to ensure each case is appropriately managed.

Updates on these outbreaks will be provided in the Department of Health's [daily media statement](#).

Caring for kids with COVID-19

Dr Andrew Martin, a paediatrician from Perth Children's Hospital, describes how COVID-19 can affect children and how to care for them at home in a [new short video](#) for parents.

Dr Martin explains that most children who contract COVID-19 manage well and can be safely cared for at home. Caring for a child with COVID-19 is very similar to caring for them when they have a common cold or mild flu.

Preparing the community for COVID-19

New resources are now available to help people in the community prepare for COVID-19.

Quarantine at home resources are available on the [HealthyWA website](#) to help Western Australians be prepared. They include considerations such as identifying friends or family members who could help with contactless food or medical supplies.

Staff are encouraged to watch out for additional [Manage COVID-19 at Home](#) resources developed to support Western Australians as they become available.

Message Authorised by: Director, Office of Director General