



## **ALERT FOR PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS**

### **COVID-19 rising; prepare for influenza and RSV**

#### **KEY POINTS**

- **COVID-19** cases, hospitalisations and wastewater indicators are increasing in Western Australia (WA).
- **Influenza** and **RSV** notifications remain at inter-seasonal levels but are expected to increase soon.
- Healthcare workers are reminded to:
  - **stay home if unwell**
  - follow standard and transmission-based precautions, including facility advice about **mask-wearing**
  - encourage eligible patients and aged care residents to receive COVID-19, influenza and RSV **immunisations**
  - **test** patients and aged care residents who have symptoms of an acute respiratory infection
  - consider **antiviral medications** for eligible patients and residents with COVID-19 and influenza.

#### **Infection prevention and control**

- Healthcare workers should stay home if unwell, follow standard and transmission-based precautions including [hand hygiene](#), respiratory hygiene (cough etiquette), appropriate and correct use of personal protective equipment, and cleaning and disinfection of shared equipment.
- Healthcare and residential care facilities may implement mask-wearing as part of their winter respiratory virus strategy, during specific situations (e.g. respiratory virus outbreak), or on advice from facility infection prevention and control staff.

#### **Immunisation and antiviral medications**

- Encourage eligible patients and aged care residents to receive COVID-19, seasonal influenza and RSV immunisations to protect against severe disease and complications:
  - free [COVID-19 vaccines](#) continue to be available for eligible Western Australians
  - free government-funded [influenza vaccines](#) are available for Western Australians aged 6 months and older during May and June 2024
  - free government-funded [RSV immunisation](#) is available for eligible infants and children in WA
  - a [RSV vaccine](#) is also recommended for older adults and is available via private purchase.
- Consider antiviral medications for eligible patients or aged care residents with [COVID-19](#) and [influenza](#).

#### **Testing**

- Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing is the gold standard for confirming SARS-CoV-2, influenza and RSV infection. This includes rapid or point-of-care PCR tests (e.g. GeneXpert).
- PCR testing should be considered for people at high-risk of severe disease and in higher risk settings.
- Patients may get a PCR test at a pathology collection centre with a referral/request form.
- In residential aged care facilities, PCR testing should continue to be performed to confirm an outbreak.
- With increased availability of rapid antigen tests (RATs) for COVID-19, influenza and RSV, they may be a useful alternative to PCR testing in the community setting, where availability of PCR testing is limited, for releasing cases from isolation, staff return-to-work, and testing asymptomatic contacts.
- In adults, RATs for RSV are less sensitive than PCR due to lower levels of virus and are more likely to give false negative results.

#### **Notification of cases**

- Routine laboratory notifications of PCR-positive cases of COVID-19, influenza and RSV occur; clinicians can notify using the communicable disease [notification form](#).
- For public health advice, phone your local [Public Health Unit](#).

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