

COVID-19

Resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Professionals



Staying Connected Stronger Together

Dear Colleagues

We are facing uncertain times. As we work collectively to control the spread of the COVID-19 virus, we know that our people are at a higher risk. Please look after yourselves and each other.

As the frontline Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce it is important you know how to protect and care for yourself, your families and our communities. We all need to do things differently. People's lives are at risk. Everybody needs to know the signs or symptoms and how to keep each other safe. In particular, care must be taken around the elderly and those with chronic health conditions - they are most at risk.

We have never been in a situation like this before and it is changing all the time. Over the coming weeks your regular roles may change dramatically and you may be faced with additional demands. You will need to take particular care of your own physical, cultural, spiritual, mental, social and emotional wellbeing.

We have put this pack together to assist and support you in this changing environment. It includes tips and information to help you care for yourself, as well as, resources for distribution in your communities. To make sure you are getting the most up to date and correct information we will continue to publishing links, resources and information on our websites, social media pages and newsletters.

The official **Australian Government website** is a good source of information. They have also developed an online **COVID-19 infection control training module** and we would encourage you all to do the training . Another good source of collated information from primary sources is the **Indigenous HealthInfoNet COVID19 portal**.

To protect against infection and prevent the virus spreading everyone must practise good hygiene, physical distancing and self-isolation when required. As a general rule the hygiene procedures that you apply in the clinic or your workplace should also be applied at home.

We are working closely together and our operations will continue to run so if you want to have a yarn, need assistance or to raise any concerns, please give us a call. We are here for you and our communities.

We acknowledge and thank you for the work that you do. Please stay safe.

The teams at:



(02) 6262 5761



1800 190 498

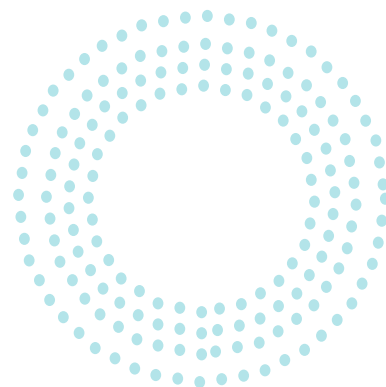


(02) 6285 1010



1800 983 984

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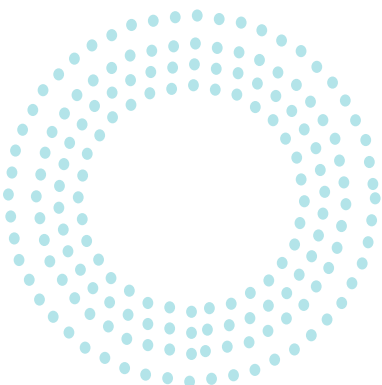
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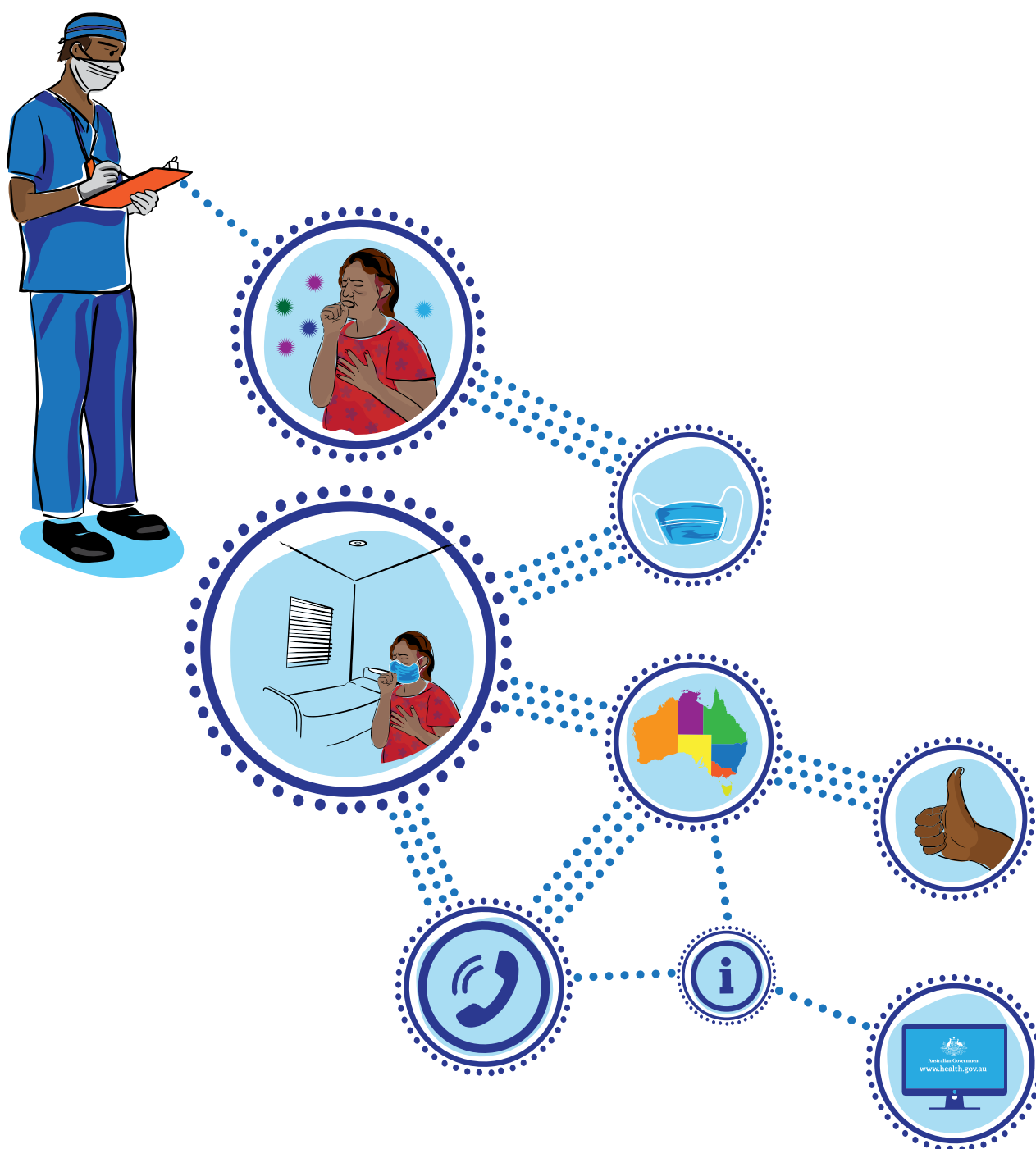


Be prepared

As Health Professionals it is important that you keep yourself informed and follow the patient management and isolation procedures outlined in your State, Territory and organisations.

Importantly, if you are approached by a person who suspects that they may have COVID-19, give them a surgical mask immediately. Ensure they put it on correctly and direct them to a single room or space – whether respiratory symptoms are present or not.

If you are uncertain about the need for testing and this is the first contact the patient has had with a health care provider, contact your local public health unit or state/territory communicable disease branch for advice.



Important links and numbers

To help you quickly access information relevant to your State, Territory or Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations we have put together the following. It may be useful to book mark the weblinks relevant to your area on your internet browser.

- » [Australian Government Department of Health](#)
- » [State and Territory Government Departments of Health:](#)
 - » [New South Wales](#)
 - » [South Australia](#)
 - » [Northern Territory](#)
 - » [Victoria](#)
 - » [Queensland](#)
 - » [Western Australia](#)
 - » [Australian Capital Territory](#)
 - » [Tasmania](#)
- » [ACCHO's – State Affiliates](#)
 - » [NACCHO](#)
 - » [AH&MRC](#)
 - » [AMSANT](#)
 - » [VACCHO](#)
 - » [AHCSA](#)
 - » [AHCWA](#)
 - » [TAC](#)
 - » [QAIHC](#)
 - » [Winnunga](#)
- » [National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Peaks](#)
 - » [NATSIHWA](#)
 - » [CATSINaM](#)
 - » [IAHA](#)
 - » [AIDA](#)

Info lines

NATIONAL
1800 020 080



ACT 02 6205 2155

NSW 1300 066 055

SA 1300 232 272

TAS 1800 671 738

QLD 13 432 584

VIC 1300 651 160

WA 08 9222 8588

NT 1800 008 002

Important wellbeing numbers



Beyond Blue – 1300 22 46 36

Talk for free to a trained mental health professional. Calls are confidential.

Lifeline – 131 114

Free 24/7 crisis support and suicide prevention telephone service.

Kids Helpline – 1800 551 800

Free telephone counselling support line for children and young people ages 5 to 25.

[e-headspace](#)

Free Online mental health support for young people. Available 9am– 1am (Melbourne time) 7 days a week.

1800 RESPECT – 1800 737 732

Free and open 24 hours to support people impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse.

GriefLine – 1300 845 745

Midday to 3am AEST 7 days a week.

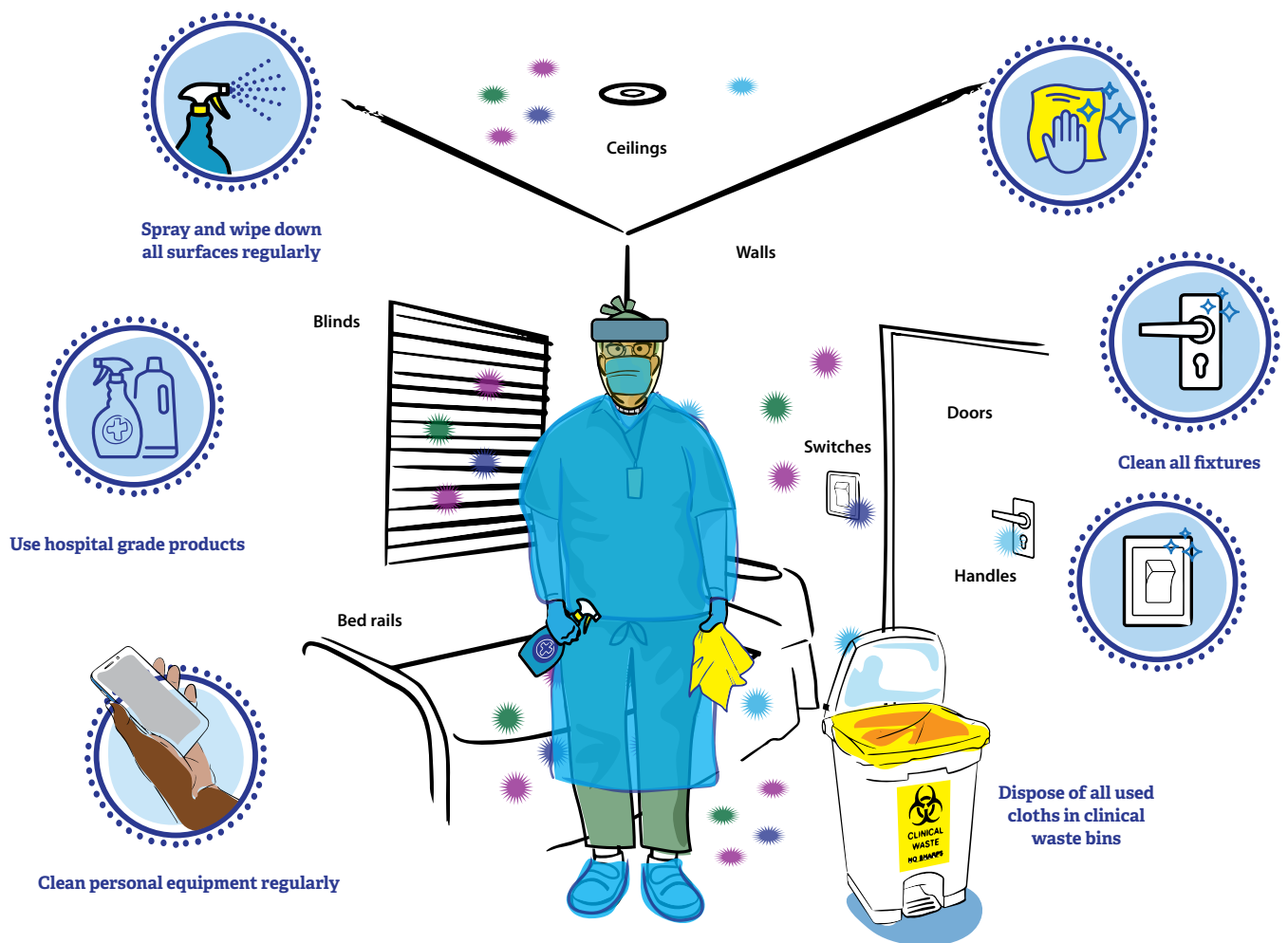
MensLine Australia – 1300 78 99 78

Free 24/7 help, support, referrals and counselling services for men via telephone.

Suicide Call Back Service – 1300 659 467

Free 24/7 counselling for anyone affected by suicidal thoughts.

1 Other Routine Precautions in your Clinic or Practice



Cleaning of patient care and common areas

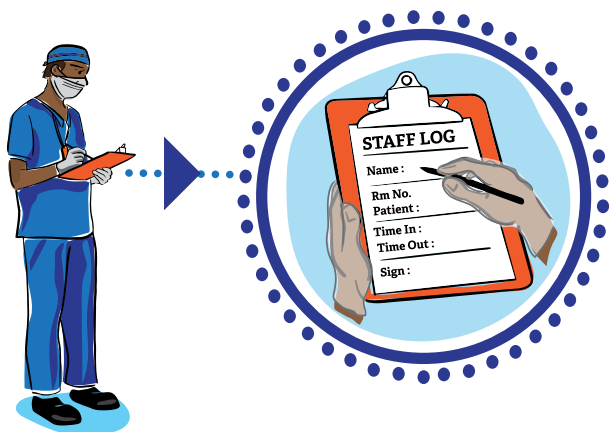
Cleaners should observe contact and droplet precautions. A combined cleaning and disinfection procedure should be used, either 2-step – detergent clean, followed by disinfectant; or 2-in-1 step – using a product that has both cleaning and disinfectant properties. Any hospital-grade, TGA-listed disinfectant that is commonly used against norovirus is suitable, if used according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Frequently touched surfaces (such as door handles, bedrails, tabletops, light switches, patient handsets) in the patient's room should also be cleaned regularly. Terminal cleaning of all surfaces in the room (as above plus floor, ceiling, walls, blinds) should be performed after the patient is discharged.

For more information see **Environmental Cleaning Procedures Factsheet**.



2 Establish Staff logs



A staff log for each room entry should be established and maintained.

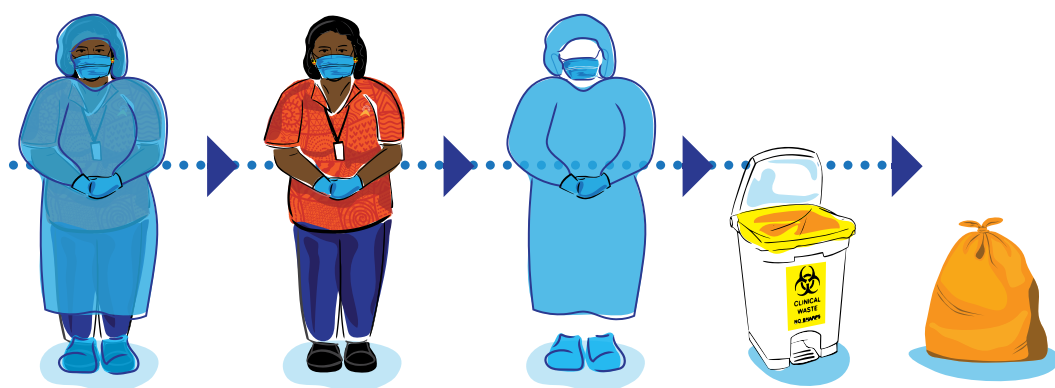
This allows follow-up of contacts and monitoring of potential breaches of infection control, if necessary.

3 Handling of linen



Routine procedures for handling of infectious linen should be followed.

4 Disposal of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and other waste



Waste should be disposed in the normal way for clinical waste.



Looking after yourself

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce needs to remain strong in body, mind and spirit during this COVID-19 outbreak.

Now more than ever our patients, clients, families, and communities need us to deliver the clinical and professional care that we have been trained to provide.

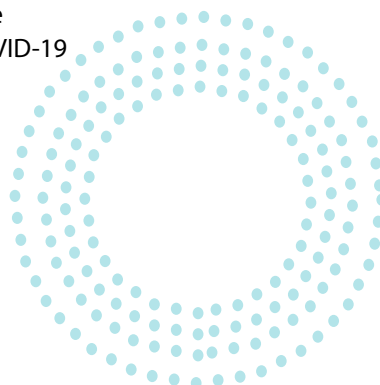
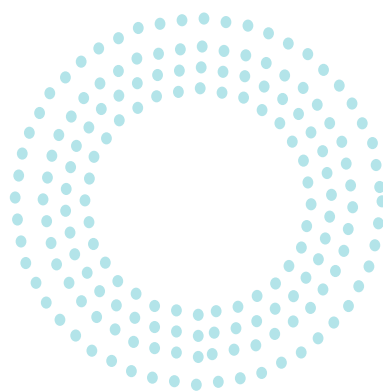
As members of the health workforce we know that we will carry an added burden for not just our own families and communities but also the wider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce. It is vital that our workforce is supported during this time and all four Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Health Workforce Organisations are working together to ensure that members stay connected and feel supported.

For members of our workforce you will be on the frontline, providing much needed clinical, acute care and essential health services to our families and community. For others you are the wellbeing or mental health support to the wider workforce, patients, clients and communities. As a workforce we need to be mindful of the impact that the COVID-19 outbreak will have on you individually, professionally, personally, socially and culturally. Your social and emotional wellbeing at this time is paramount – if you are not well, then you cannot provide care for our community.

As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, we are all about relationships and connections – maintaining those connections and relationships is more vital now than ever before. How do we do this in this new era of physical distancing and self-isolation?

- » Staying in touch via the phone, email, social media, zoom etc are certainly great ways to stay connected.
- » Spending time outdoors, when possible is also important.
- » Music, song, dance - those connections back to our cultural ways of being are also important.
- » Comedy and having a laugh with our friends and family is another way we can remain connected. Our humour and ability to connect with each other is our strength, we need to find ways to enable us to do that across distances.
- » Watching something on TV, or on-line, a favourite movie just to have some time out from the anxiety and stresses that come with the COVID-19 outbreak.

Here are some strategies that may help you stay connected and ensure we are stronger together.



1 Tune into SELF – your OWN health and wellbeing

Know that your role in managing COVID-19 is a very important responsibility .

This is time to take care of your own physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing so that you can be strong and care for others, both family and community.

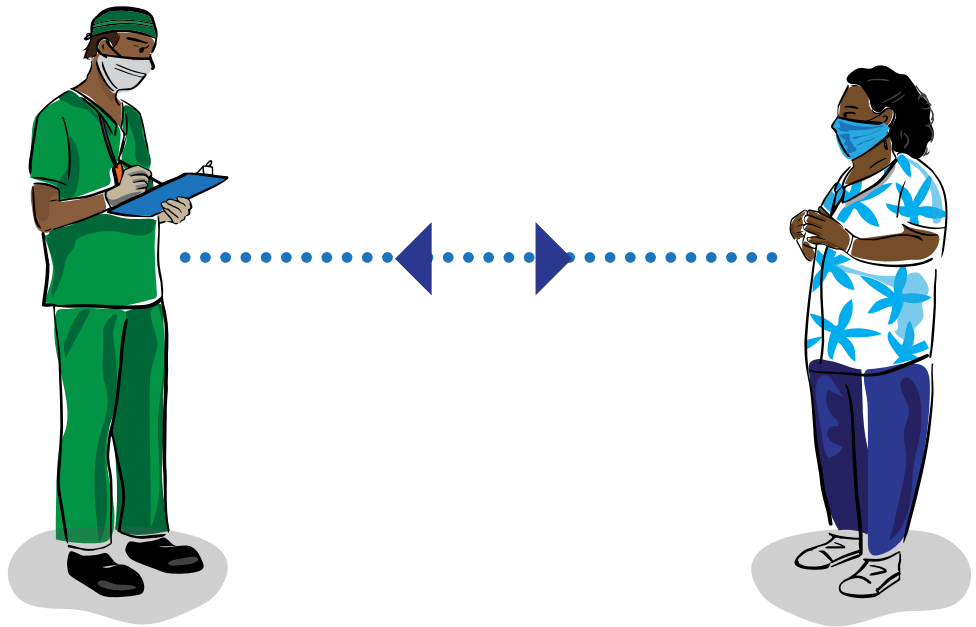


2 We need you to be safe for you, and for your families and your communities

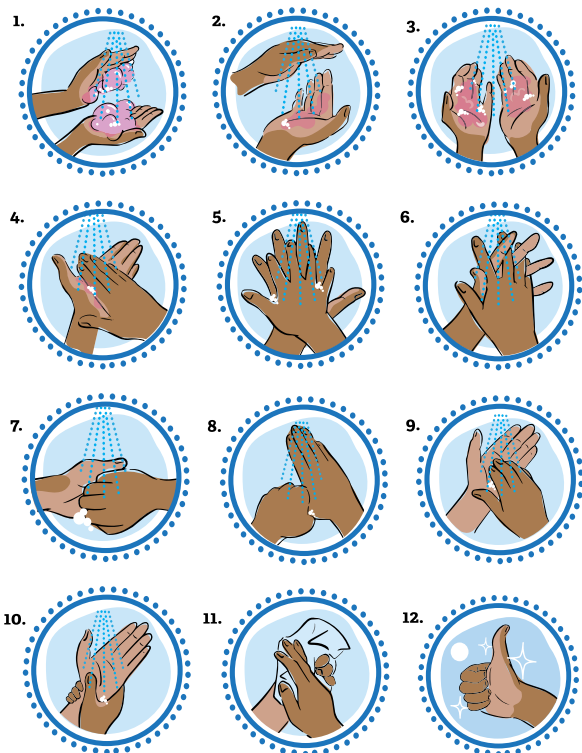
Carry out all of the physical distancing, hygiene, and quarantining actions.

Keep at least a 2 meter distance apart when in public spaces (with exception to family and members of your household).

Work to the current procedural guidelines for your profession or workplace when providing care.



Practice good hygiene, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water, for at least 20 seconds, on a regular basis.



Self isolate and quarantine if and when necessary.

If you feel sick or have any COVID-19 symptoms, self isolate as best as you can, and seek medical advice immediately.

Quarantining for at least two weeks and listening to medical advice is critical if you test positive for COVID-19.



3 Try to eat well, get sleep and exercise if you can. You will need this energy to get through this.



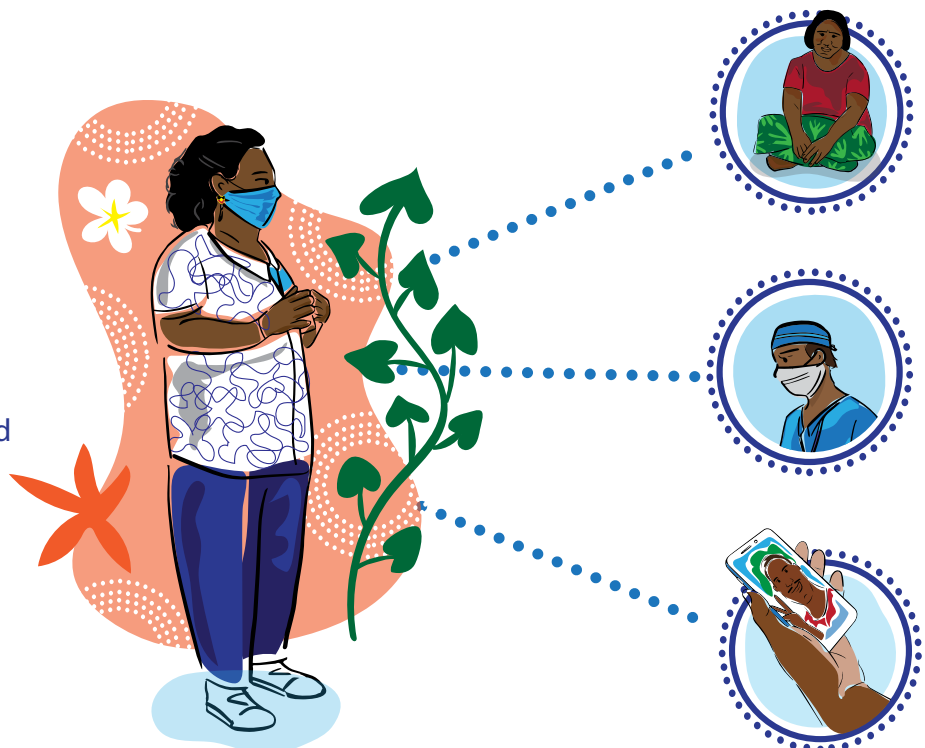
Eat smaller meals, more often. Remember to drink water.

Exercise – simple as stretching, fresh air.

At least 6 hours sleep or rest when you can.

4 Feeling confident and supported

- » Be prepared for and accept change
- » Stay as informed as much as you can; but don't overwhelm yourself
- » Have your support plan of your trusted mentors, supervisors, colleagues, those that keep you well
- » Culture keeps us strong and well – so it's important to have a Cultural Wellbeing plan
- » Embrace reflective practice – use journals, diaries, drawing, poetry



5 Keeping you and your family well and safe

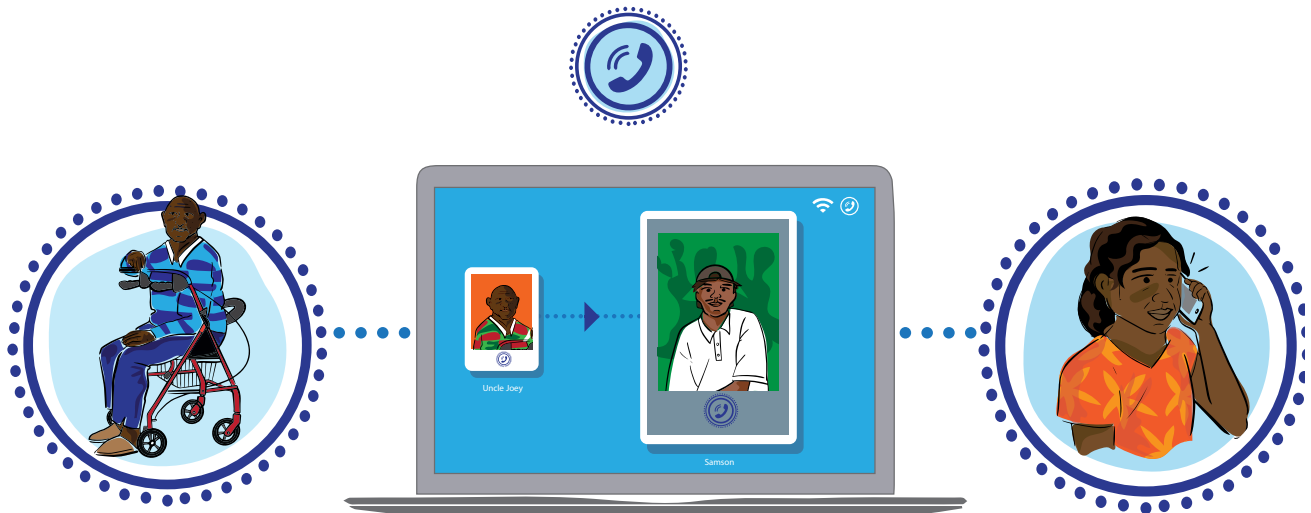
Support one another, keep your family safe and well, stay isolated from older people. Help from a distance where and when you can.

- » Support the family staying in your home to understand the importance of staying at home.
- » Self isolate when not at work and do things that you have been putting off like weeding the garden, art and craft.
- » Eat well and chill out.
- » Be kind to others.
- » Think before you drink or smoke.
- » Try not to panic – breathe, find a calm space and/or place (inside or within yourself).
- » Regather and connect with someone to talk to.
- » Use your wellbeing plan and encourage others to do the same.



6 Staying connected to culture and the environment

Stay connected to Country, water, land and sky, and to our ways of knowing, being and doing. Culture keeps us strong and grounded.



- » Do your family history.
- » Record stories.
- » Draw on things that have meaning to you and your family.
- » Stay connected with your family and friends by phone.
- » Face time and record yourself to share with others.
- » Tell a yarn to mob.
- » Have a good laugh thinking about old times.

- » Talk about the future.
- » Stay connected and network with other Indigenous health professionals and workforce.
- » Remember we are all working together to make a difference.
- » Share your learnings with others.
- » Find solutions together.
- » Collaborate and care for each other.

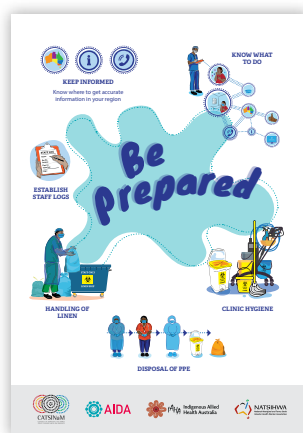
7 Reminders for your clinic

As a frontline health professional you need to know what to do in case of a COVID-19 outbreak. Being prepared and understanding the procedures in place for your area will help you to keep yourself, your families and communities safe.

You play an important role and your skills and knowledge are needed now more than ever before. This means you also need to ensure you are taking care of yourself and making your own needs a priority.

To remind you of this we have prepared the following for display in your clinic or practice:

Be prepared



[A4 Poster](#) | [A3 Poster](#)

Staying healthy and strong



[A4 Poster](#) | [A3 Poster](#)

We are connected, we are strong and we as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have survived.

Always was, always will be.



Resources to help you keep our communities safe

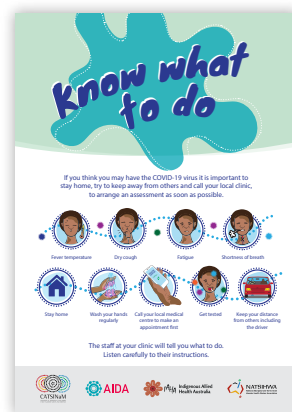
To help you keep our communities safe the following posters are for display in your clinics, practices and communities.

Know the signs and symptoms



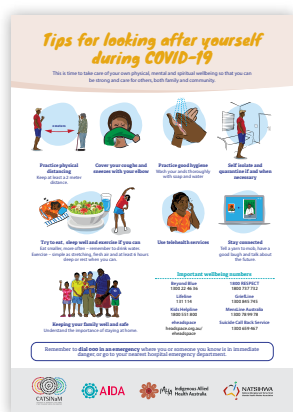
A4 Poster | A3 Poster

Know what to do



A4 Poster | A3 Poster

Tips for looking after yourself



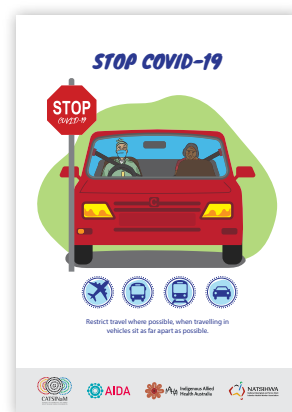
A4 Poster | A3 Poster

Keeping each other safe



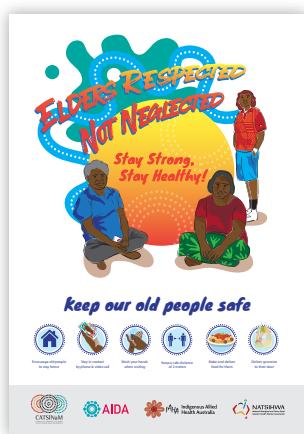
A4 Poster | A3 Poster

Travel restrictions



A4 Poster | A3 Poster

Protecting our Elders

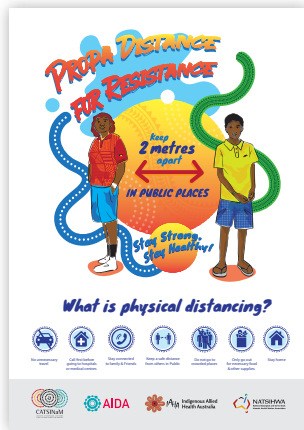


A4 Poster | A3 Poster

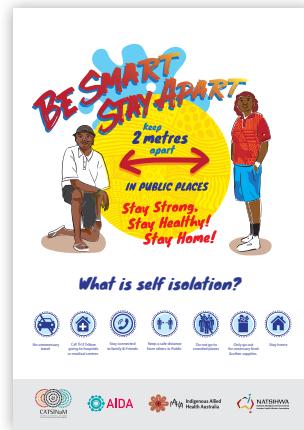


A4 Poster | A3 Poster

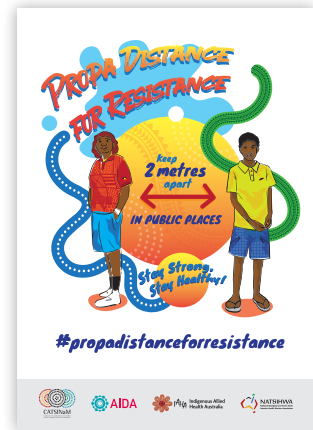
Keeping your distance



[A4 Poster](#) | [A3 Poster](#)



[A4 Poster](#) | [A3 Poster](#)



[A4 Poster](#) | [A3 Poster](#)

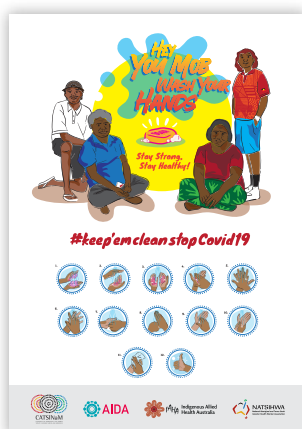
Hand washing



[A4 Poster](#) | [A3 Poster](#)



[A4 Poster](#) | [A3 Poster](#)



[A4 Poster](#) | [A3 Poster](#)



[A4 Poster](#) | [A3 Poster](#)



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Health Australia

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