



Distribution of gowns through PHNs: Addendum to Tranche 4, gowns for general practices including Aboriginal Controlled Community Health Services (ACCHS) in areas of COVID-19 community transmission in Victoria¹

Guidance on the supply of gowns from the National Medical Stockpile (NMS) for General Practice (including Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services) through Primary Health Networks (PHNs)

17 July 2020

This guidance document is provided to ensure consistent and transparent management of supply of gowns to general practices including ACCHS to areas in Victoria facing critical supply constraints AND substantially increased risk of exposure to COVID-19.

Eligibility to access gowns

GP Respiratory Clinics, General Practices, including Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS)

As supplies are limited, PHNs have been given the role of distributing gowns to practices with demonstrated need, including:

- where there is no alternative supply available commercially and practices have confirmed that lack of gowns is preventing them from assessing and/or testing patients.
- where practices have a population which may be more likely to have been exposed to the novel coronavirus (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), and Nurse Practitioner owned or led primary care practices in their area.

Intended use of gowns

The use of personal protective equipment (PPE) should be determined by a risk assessment, based on the patient's presenting condition. 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 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.**

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

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.

See <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> for further guidance on use of PPE in non-inpatient settings.

If GPs are unable to undertake appropriate contact and droplet precautions for clinical assessment and specimen collection from patients with suspected COVID-19 through lack of appropriate PPE, they should refer cases to appropriate collection centres or Emergency Departments.

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

Quantities

When allocating gowns per practice, PHNs have the flexibility to determine allocation per practice. This should take into account practice size, and practice need; including the number of patients that the practice is likely to assess and test themselves.

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