

Annandale Physiotherapy Pty Ltd

Position Statement, Policies and Procedures regarding Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Adapted from document written by Jacqueline Eaton, Director Physio For You Pty Ltd

Date: 13.03.2020

This document is based on advice and policies from the Australian Physiotherapy Association, The World Health Organisation and the Department of Health.

Sources: Australian Physiotherapy Association Website: <https://australian.physio/coronavirus>. Accessed 13.03.2020

The World Health Organisation Website: www.who.int. Accessed 13.03.2020

Australian Government Department of Health Website: www.health.gov.au. Accessed 13.03.2020.

To my colleagues, our patients, our partners in health and your families,

In 2020, the world is facing one of the biggest challenges in modern medical history, the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus.

While a health alert of this scale has not been previously issued in my or many of our lifetimes, we must formulate a plan to manage to the very best of our ability. This plan will change as the situation develops, and this document will be updated regularly as new information and procedures evolve. I am committed to maintaining the highest standards of infection control while still providing our essential community-based service; physiotherapy.

I will not place staff or patients at undue risk of contracting coronavirus. We as a company, as a group of people, as friends and as communities, need to look out for each other. We need to demonstrate the basic human social functions of compassion, empathy, understanding and support for all, as we all are, or will be, affected by this virus in some way.

As physiotherapists, we obtain informed consent from our patients, prior to delivering our physiotherapy services. During this time, some patients may choose to delay their appointments for non-urgent matters. This is their decision and we will support this. Some patients may choose to use our tele-health facilities for their appointments. This is their decision and we will support this. Some patients may choose to wear a facemask and gloves during their appointment. This is their decision and we will support this. Some staff may choose to avoid contact with at-risk or all patients. This is their decision and we will support this.

The Australian Physiotherapy Association is our professional association. The Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency and the Department of Health are our governing bodies. In a situation such as this, we follow the advice, policies and procedures outlined by these organisations. Information included in this document is sourced from these organisations and applied to our Physio For You clinics.

I ask that you maintain open and honest communication with me, with your colleagues and your patients. Now is the time to minimise harm, especially to those most vulnerable in our community.

We will endure this pandemic as a team and we will emerge on the other side when the dust settles. You can always contact me if you have concerns or need guidance during this unusual time.

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The World Health Organisation has declared the coronavirus (COVID-19) a pandemic requiring a global coordinated effort.

There is currently no vaccine available for this new virus and symptoms can include fever, flu-like symptoms such as coughing, sore throat and fatigue and/or shortness of breath.

Steps Annandale Physiotherapy is taking immediately, following advice from The Australian Physiotherapy Association:

- Annandale Physiotherapy has and will continue to discuss a plan of action with staff and colleagues. This document has been emailed all staff and contractors.
- Ensure that all clinical and non-clinical staff have a good understanding of infection control principles. Non-clinical staff at Annandale Physiotherapy are taught infection control policies upon their induction and onboarding process.
- Know the signs of the coronavirus and be vigilant. Annandale Physiotherapy staff have been informed of the signs of coronavirus and are encouraged to monitor themselves and their families, their patients and those they come into contact with in the community. Symptoms can range from mild illness to pneumonia. Some people will recover easily, and others may get very sick very quickly. People with coronavirus may experience fever, flu-like symptoms such as coughing, sore throat and fatigue and shortness of breath.
- Placement of information posters in clinic. Annandale Physio has sourced the recommended posters from the APA and the Department of Health today, and these have been provided to staff to display in our clinic prior to opening on Monday 16.3.2020. These are:

Hand hygiene for visitors

Hand hygiene for staff

COVID-19 alert poster - Size A4

Posters developed by the Department of Health:

Know the signs

Stop the spread

- Consider advising patients to reconsider/delay treatment if they have flu like symptoms or have travelled internationally in recent weeks. Annandale Physiotherapy staff have been advised of this. Patients booking appointments by phone will be advised of this.
- Have a supply of masks available in the clinic. We still have masks available and will continue to use them as required. I have ordered more but they are currently on back order.
- Use preventative measures to limit the spread of virus. Annandale Physiotherapy continues to comply with our regular infection control policy, as well as increasing the scope and frequency of cleaning and sanitising regimes. The procedures we follow are outlined in the document: Information on Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Principles, which can be accessed in full at: <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/03/environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection-principles-for-covid-19.pdf>.

How can I individually reduce transmission?

Practising good hand and sneeze/cough hygiene is the best defence against most viruses. You should:

- wash your hands frequently with soap and water, before and after eating, and after going to the toilet
- cover your cough and sneeze, dispose of tissues, and use alcohol-based hand sanitiser
- and if unwell, avoid contact with others (stay more than 1.5 metres from people).

How Annandale Physiotherapy will protect our clinic from coronavirus outbreaks

Cancellation policy – The Annandale Physiotherapy cancellation policy will be suspended until 30.06.2020.

Before attendance

We have developed a system, prior to attendance (phone call/SMS), to ask patients whether they've been to high risk countries or have had close contact with a person with confirmed COVID-19 while infectious, in the 14 days before the scheduled appointment.

If the patient meets the above criteria we will:

- consider alternate methods of conducting the appointment if appropriate (e.g. telephone or tele-medicine)
- if it is not possible to conduct the appointment in an alternate way, reschedule their appointment for as soon as possible after the 14 day exclusion

- remind them they are to self-isolate at home for 14 days after they departed from high risk countries or if they have had close contact with a person with confirmed COVID-19 while infectious
- remind them they are advised to practice social distancing if they have been overseas to a country other than high risk countries in the last 14 days
- remind them if they develop respiratory symptoms or fever to call their local GP.

The person who will assess whether or not it's safe to defer the outpatient appointment is the Annandale Physiotherapy Director, Lillian Lau.

During attendance

Implementation of options to identify patients in the outpatient clinic waiting room, including waiting room posters, asking patients at reception whether they have been to or transited through counties listed as high risk in the last 14 days or have had close contact with a person with confirmed COVID-19 while infectious, in the previous 14 days.

For patients who meet the above criteria:

- Annandale Physiotherapy will reschedule any non-urgent consultations until after the 14 self-isolation period.
- For urgent needs, patients will be provided details of other available health services or referred to the public hospital system.

For patients who meet the above criteria within 14 days of their appointment and who do not report any respiratory symptoms or fever:

- Annandale Physiotherapy will reschedule any non-urgent consultations until after the 14 self-isolation period.
- For urgent needs, patients will be provided details of other available health services or referred to the public hospital system.

For patients who meet the above criteria and who report symptoms, we will refer the patient to their local general practitioner.

Source: NSW Health COVID-19: Interim guidance for elective surgery and outpatient clinics

Can Annandale Physiotherapy refuse treatment of patients, especially those who have been Coronavirus hot spots??

It is reasonable to screen any patients or staff on the basis of known coronavirus infection criteria including physical symptoms and travel to identified 'hot spots'.

On the basis of this information, you may request a patient delay attendance for 14 days or, until no longer symptomatic. For further information, we recommend reviewing the guidelines found in the AHPRA Code of Conduct for Registered Health Practitioners Section 2.4, page 4.

What will Annandale Physiotherapy do if there is a patient or employee with a suspected case of coronavirus?

As advised by the Australian Physiotherapy Association, we will refer to the Department of Health Fact Sheet for information with dealing suspected coronavirus cases. This can be accessed at: <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/03/interim-advice-on-non-inpatient-care-of-persons-with-suspected-or-confirmed-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-including-use-of-personal-protective-equipment-ppe.pdf>

We will also contact the healthdirect helpline on 1800 022 222 to speak with a registered nurse from the Department of Health to access the most recent advice.

Use of face masks

With the emergence of COVID-19 across many countries, there is a global shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE), including surgical masks and P2/N95 respirators. As a first step in releasing PPE from the National Medical Stockpile, the Australian Government has provided a limited supply of surgical masks (1,125,000) and P2/N95 respirators (27,200) for general practices (including Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services) and community pharmacies with a demonstrated need.

There is no need for the general public or health workers to wear masks unless they are dealing with symptomatic patients. Further guidance on the use of surgical masks can be found at www.health.gov.au/covid19-health-professionals.

Should staff or patients choose to wear a face mask during work hours or while attending our clinics, they will be supported in this decision.

Management of Suspected Cases

To date, we have not experienced a suspected case of coronavirus in our staff or patient population. Should this occur, we will follow the following advice from the Department of Health and the Australian Physiotherapy Association:

For people with a suspected case

- Information sheet for people with symptoms
- Isolation guidance

For travellers

- Information sheet for travellers, including isolation requirements
- Isolation guidance

This document is subject to change. Staff will be notified of amendments.