

Dear Doctor

Keeping local GPs informed

Issue 2



COVID - 19 Update

Dear Doctor,

Welcome to the second edition of our newsletter just for local GPs, devoted to the hospital's response to Covid - 19 and our current services that may impact on your practice.

Firstly St Vincent's is playing its part providing pandemic support services to our Northern NSW Local Health District and the Base Hospital in particular. We are ready and willing to do more to support our regional healthcare system and are geared up to do so as part of a coordinated COVID - 19 response. Please be assured all our staff have appropriate levels of PPE.

Elective surgery restrictions eased. The biggest impact for patients in relation to the hospital has been your referrals that require surgery and the temporary suspension of elective surgery. You are aware the Government on the 25th of March suspended all but Category 1 and Urgent Category 2 elective surgery.

Those restrictions have now eased and from April 27th all Category 2 surgery and selected Category 3 were permitted. St Vincent's has responded and has resumed all Category 2 and Selected Category 3 procedures in our theatres. Our Endoscopy Unit is also fully operational again. I will update you regarding elective surgery as on May 11th the Government will again review these restrictions.

But for now the Category 3 procedures currently permitted are:

- Post cancer reconstruction procedures (such as breast reconstruction)
- Procedures for children under 18 years of age

- Joint replacements (including knees, hips, shoulders)
- Cataracts and other eye procedures
- Endoscopy and colonoscopy procedures.

New Assessment Unit operational. In response to the evolving situation, and to better protect staff and patients, St Vincent's opened a *Medical Assessment Unit* with all medical admissions now passing through the Unit before going into the hospital proper. The system is working well.

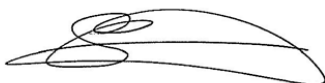
Hospital visits restricted. Please advise your patients, where appropriate, to protect the community St Vincent's has current restrictions on visitors as follows: only an immediate family member or carer of the patient can visit the hospital; patients may have a maximum of one visitor per day, for a maximum of one hour in duration and visiting hours are currently restricted to between 1pm and 6pm daily. These restrictions will be reviewed as the situation changes and I will inform you when they do.

Visitor restrictions at nursing home. To better protect residents and staff in our on-campus nursing home St Joseph's, the facility was closed to visitors on March 25th with the support of staff and families. As of (insert date) those restrictions have now eased and St Joseph's is open to visitors with strict protocols and additional protection measures in place. We continue monitoring this situation closely as our seniors are the most vulnerable to serious consequences of COVID - 19.

We will keep you informed of any changes as they arise in this evolving situation.

Thank you for all you do for your patients and our community.

Very best



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