

Practical Advice for the NT AOD sector

Coronavirus (COVID-19)



What is COVID-19?

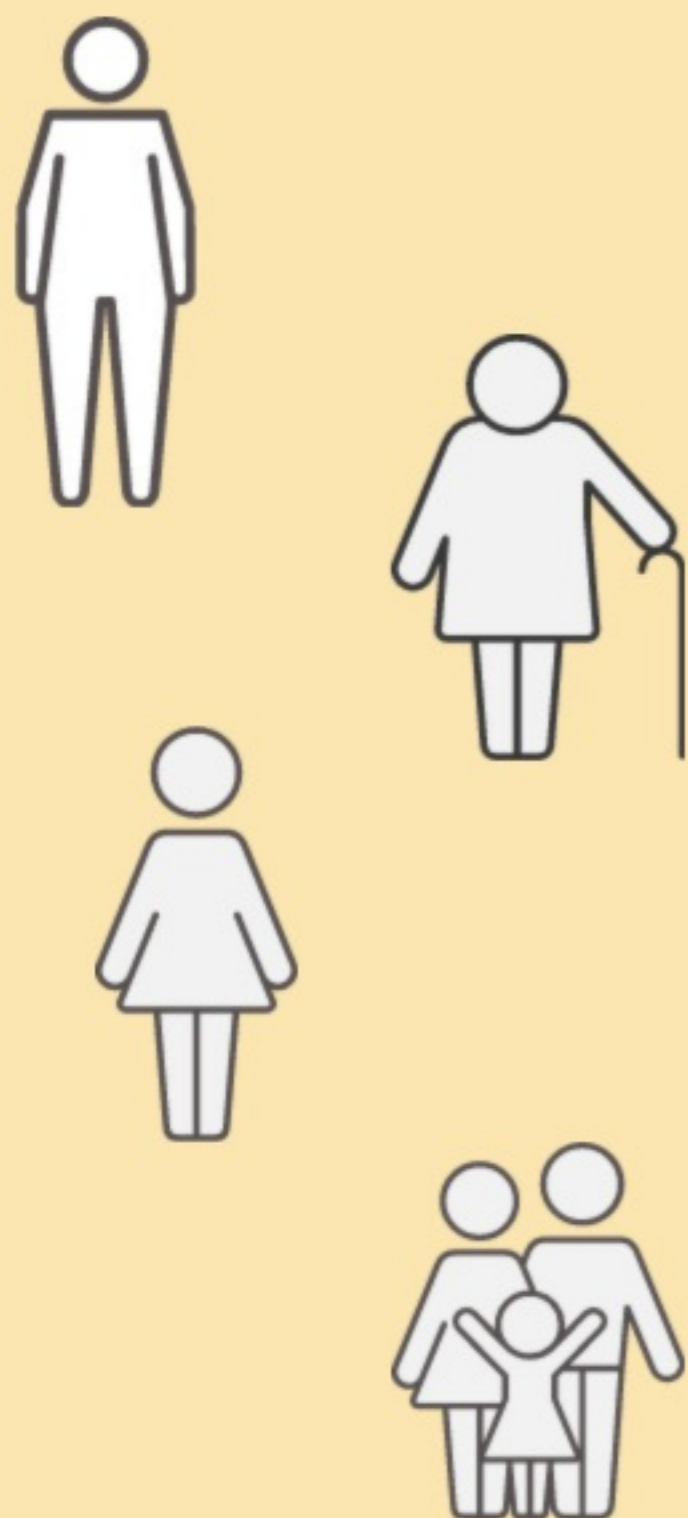
Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that can make humans and animals sick. COVID-19 is caused by a new strain of coronavirus that was first reported in December 2019.

If you have travelled overseas recently, take extra caution. Countries such as Mainland China, Italy, Iran, South Korea and other European countries are most affected.

What are the symptoms?

Everyone may be affected differently. Symptoms include fever, flu-like symptoms, including coughing, sore throat and fatigue, shortness of breath.

If you have a fever, cough or other symptoms, seek medical care early. If you think you could have contracted COVID-19, you should call ahead before visiting a doctor.



Vulnerable Populations

The elderly, very young children and babies, those who smoke, pregnant women and immunocompromised persons are particularly vulnerable.

If you are currently taking treatment for hepatitis B or hepatitis C, or other chronic conditions, it is recommended to ensure you have an adequate stock of your medication to reduce unnecessary visits to health services or pharmacies. It is a good reminder to consider asking your doctor for a liver health check if you have not had one in the last six months.

People with significant liver disease are recommended to receive vaccinations against influenza and pneumococcal disease.

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander populations are vulnerable as well. Remote locations are less equipped to handle an outbreak as larger cities. Travel to remote communities during this outbreak should be necessary travel only.



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Service Planning

The World Health Organisation has declared Coronavirus a pandemic. This means the infected proportion is 10-30% or more, limited or no specific treatment available, global, concurrent, widespread impacts, limited to no background immunity.

Services are encouraged to plan accordingly including infection control and cleaning, staff absenteeism and surge, Criticality of services and staff, Staff training and education especially regarding Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and vulnerable populations.

Mitigation Strategies

- Cancel or defer elective or discretionary services
- Minimise residential service and hospital admissions
- Consider vulnerable clients: immunocompromised, pregnant, respiratory comorbidities, homeless, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- Consider tele/digital support instead of face-to-face
- Consider Medication supply and delivery options, other logistics issues
- Service rationing - prioritisation framework, ethics
- Extended surge duration and staff fatigue / burnout - adequate rostering; critical staff relief/back-ups



Infection Prevention

- Standard and transmission based precautions
- Isolation or segregation if appropriate (consider patient flows)
- Hand hygiene using hand washing and/or alcohol-based hand rub
- Respiratory etiquette principles apply
- PPE (requires training and support eg fit checking; may require buddy system)
- Environmental cleaning (cleaning and disinfection)
- Waste management follows normal infectious clinical waste processes
- Linen management follows normal processes.

Visit the Australian Government Department of Health website for up to date information here:

www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert

www.nada.org.au/news/coronavirus-news-and-resources/