Keeping safe in the workplace during COVID-19

Community Settings

The Health Care Worker Expert Panel reviews COVID-19 exposures in the workplace and has identified key lessons on COVID-19 exposures and risk. This week's focus is on keeping safe while working in a community setting or undertaking a home visit.

There has been a range of health worker exposures in community settings reported since early August 2021. **Two thirds** of the exposures have occurred when a patient or a family/household member has tested positive to COVID-19 in the days following either a health worker visiting the home or attending a community setting. **Wearing the correct PPE** will be vital to keep you safe from unknown positive cases.

Lessons learnt to keep you and your colleagues safe:

- Undertake a COVID-19 risk assessment before the home visit - take the time to ask relevant questions and prompt the patient or family member to consider their answers carefully.
  - Remain alert to COVID-19 symptoms during the visit noting if the patient or household members are showing any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 e.g. coughing. Take immediate action to escalate to manager when required.
- Protect yourself:
  - Physically distance >1.5m where possible.
  - Always use Standard Precautions in line with usual practice: hand hygiene, physical distancing, cough etiquette.
  - Use appropriate PPE based on the task you are undertaking or in accordance with a patient's status. Be especially mindful when undertaking clinical examinations, direct care, assessments and clinical procedures
- When health facilities are on Red Alert on the NSW Health Risk Matrix:*
  - All health workers are to wear a surgical mask **at all times** during a home visit and patients are to wear a mask (surgical or approved cloth mask) when receiving care where possible.
  - Ensure no other family members or friends are in the room with you and the patient, unless they are required for support.

*The COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control Response and Escalation Framework (Risk Matrix) has been developed to provide guidance to NSW health facilities/home visits on the various levels of COVID-19 transmission risk.

Speak up for safety: support your team to do the right thing

Got COVID-19 symptoms? Get tested | Practise good hygiene | Check in and out | Practise physical distancing | Wear a mask