What is essential health care?

Essential health care is any care that is not available in the patient’s home state or territory or cannot reasonably be provided via telehealth or virtual health. This includes routine clinical care where there is a continuity of service with an established clinical relationship. Examples of essential health care include:

- continuing routine clinical relationships with a dentist, GP, treating hospital or community clinic
- appointments with Queensland Children’s Hospital
- specialist rehabilitation services or cardiac care.

Patient requirements

Refer to the Entering Queensland for essential health care fact sheet. It is important to monitor the Queensland Government Border Restrictions Direction website for updates as advice can change in response to the spread of COVID-19 within the community.

NSW border zone residents

As of 1 October 2020, NSW border residents who have not travelled outside of the border zone in NSW in the past 14 days need to apply for a Border Zone Travel Declaration Pass (X Pass) before travelling to Queensland. Keep updated regarding areas that qualify for the border zone.

NSW non-border residents

Restrictions are in place for NSW non-border residents as they are currently categorised as living in a COVID-19 hotspot. These residents may enter Queensland to obtain essential health care or as a support person to another obtaining such care if they:

1. complete the Essential Health Care Declaration Pass (H Pass)
2. provide written evidence (in printed or electronic form confirmed by the treating service, facility or provider) for any of the following appointment(s) at:
   a) Queensland Children’s Hospital
   b) a Queensland Hospital and Health Service (HHS) or associated outreach location
   c) a licensed Queensland private health facility or ancillary clinic or service
   d) an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Service
   e) another premise with a prescribed health practitioner.

Note: A prescribed health practitioner means a person registered to provide the following services: dental, medical, medical radiation practice, midwifery, nursing, occupational therapy,
optometry, paramedicine, pharmacy, physiotherapy, podiatry, psychology, or services as a registered NDIS provider under an agreed NDIS plan. An appointment at an ancillary clinic or service may include an appointment at a rehabilitation service.

The written evidence from a), b), c) and d) above can be in the form of an official letter or the facility may choose to use the approved form for entering Queensland to receive essential health care. The approved form must be used when the essential health care is an appointment with a prescribed health practitioner at a premises other than the Queensland Children’s Hospital, a Queensland Hospital and Health Service or associated outreach location, a Queensland private health facility or an ancillary clinic or service, or an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Service.

Patients will be required to comply with quarantining requirements if they are staying overnight or longer. Patients may be accompanied by a support person or persons. Support persons will need to obtain an Essential Health Care Declaration Pass (H Pass) and comply with quarantine arrangements as required.

Recommended infection prevention measures

PPE escalation will be informed by direction from the Chief Health Officer and the State Health Emergency Coordination Centre in consideration of the risk of community transmission. Ongoing risk assessment of patients should occur in all care settings in order to inform the most appropriate PPE required for specific clinical interactions.

- Upon presentation to a reception area of any health care provider, patients should immediately:
  - wash their hands or clean them with alcohol-based hand sanitiser
  - sit 1.5 metres away from other persons while waiting for their medical service or appointment
- The patients should be screened and assessed for any of the following:
  - fever of 37.5°C or more, chills, myalgia
  - acute respiratory symptoms (e.g. cough, shortness of breath, sore throat)
  - loss of smell or taste
  - headache, runny nose, vomiting or diarrhea
  - fatigue, loss of appetite
  - travel to any COVID-19 hotspots (check for updated declared hotspots on the Queensland Health website).
- If anyone presents with any of these symptoms above, they should be provided with a mask and immediately separated from other people (preferably in a room with the door shut). Health care providers then need to seek medical advice before proceeding.
- Standard precautions should be applied for all patients regardless of their known or presumed infectious status. Standard precautions are the primary strategy for minimising the risk of infection and must be used as part of day-to-day practice when providing health care.
- Good hand hygiene and cough etiquette should always be applied.
- A physical distance of 1.5 metres from the patient should be maintained wherever possible and close contact should be limited to less than 15 minutes if possible.
- The care/service to be delivered should be risk assessed and the recommended infection prevention and control measures outlined in the resources below should be followed:
Cleaning

In addition to routine cleaning, frequently touched surfaces should be wiped after every patient with detergent/disinfectant wipes or a detergent product by using a disposable cloth.

The preferred routine cleaning process should involve either:

- **2-step clean:**
  Physical cleaning with detergent followed by disinfection with a TGA-listed hospital-grade disinfectant with activity against viruses (according to label/product information) or a chlorine-based product such as sodium hypochlorite.

- **2-in-1 clean:**
  A physical clean using a combined detergent and TGA-listed hospital-grade disinfectant with activity against viruses (according to label/product information) or a chlorine-based product such as sodium hypochlorite, where indicated for use, i.e. a combined detergent/disinfectant wipe or solution.

Any contaminated or visibly soiled surface should be cleaned and disinfected immediately.

If the patient has had an invasive respiratory or aerosol-generating procedure, the room must remain vacant for at least 30 minutes before cleaning commences.

In all other instances, once the patient vacates the room, cleaning can commence immediately.

Sourcing personal protective equipment (PPE)

Outpatient clinics, medical imaging and dental clinic areas should source PPE supplies through their usual supplier.

Records

The health service must maintain accurate and complete records of all patients who attend the service. This should include the name, address, phone number, email address, as well as the date, time and type of service. Records are to be made available to Queensland Health if a COVID-19 case who attended the service during their infectious or exposure period is notified.