

Kidney Patient COVID-19 Information Sheet

Content aligned with Queensland Health Advice
Supported by the Statewide Renal Clinical Network

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Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a new viral illness that has been classified as a global pandemic by the World Health Organisation. It's part of a large family of viruses that can cause similar illnesses like the common cold.

Everyone has a part to play to help stop the virus spreading, not only to protect ourselves' but also to protect those in the wider community at higher risk of serious illness. We should all practice good hygiene including washing our hands regularly, using a tissue and covering our mouth when coughing or sneezing, and avoiding close contact with others when possible.

People with kidney disease, those on dialysis and those with a transplant should be aware that, just like with the flu, they are at a higher risk of severe symptoms and complications from COVID-19 than the general population.

Our hospitals and GP clinics are open

- During the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, it is important that you go to your usual (regular), confirmed appointment with your doctor or healthcare professional. This is even more important if you are someone with an existing chronic health condition.
- Putting off your healthcare can be dangerous and now is not the time to delay getting the healthcare you need. Our expert doctors and healthcare workers are waiting to see you.
- To stop the spread of COVID-19, the advice is to stay home as much as possible. We understand this is confusing if you are feeling unwell and need medical help. But, if you are sick and would usually see a doctor or health professional, or go to a hospital, we are here to help you.
- Your health and your safety remain our highest priority. As restrictions continue to ease in Queensland, people still need to take extra steps to protect themselves and those most at risk. To protect yourself, your family and the community from getting COVID-19 you must maintain good hygiene and practice social distancing.
- Our hospitals, emergency departments, GPs and Allied Health support, including physiotherapy, psychology, podiatry, dietetics, optometry or occupational therapy, are open and ready to provide safe and essential care either face-to-face or via telehealth.

If you do become unwell, or have symptoms that suggest COVID-19 infection, it's important to be checked out early. For health advice, call 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84), your local doctor (GP) or your renal service.

The symptoms of COVID-19 can be

 Fever  Sore throat  Runny nose  Diarrhoea  Loss of smell and/or taste	 Cough  Shortness of breath  Fatigue  Vomiting or nausea	 <p>Call your Renal Service first before coming in if you feel sick with fever, or have difficulty breathing, have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19, or if you have recently been anywhere overseas. They will advise you on what to do.</p>
<p>Other symptoms people may experience include muscle or joint pain, and loss of appetite. Everyone who gets COVID-19 will experience it a little differently.</p>		

COVID-19 vaccine

Queensland has two COVID-19 vaccines available now – Pfizer and AstraZeneca. You can speak with your healthcare provider about the most appropriate vaccine for you. COVID-19 vaccinations are being provided in a planned, staged approach. People at higher risk of getting COVID-19 or of severe illness if they get COVID-19 will receive the vaccine early. For the latest information on the COVID-19 vaccine, including eligibility for receiving the vaccine, you can also visit the [Queensland Health COVID-19 webpage](#).

Influenza (the flu) vaccine

Whilst the flu vaccine will not prevent COVID-19 infection, it can reduce the severity and spread of influenza, which may make a person more at risk to other illnesses like COVID-19. Flu vaccination is very important for people with kidney disease. Free flu vaccinations are now available to eligible Queenslanders.

For the latest patient and carer information on COVID-19 you can also:

- Phone **13 Health (13 43 25 84)**: a confidential phone service that provides health advice to Queenslanders
- Visit the [Queensland Health website](#)
- Visit the [Kidney Health Australia website](#)
- Phone the **Community Recovery Hotline on 1800 173 349** If you need some practical support to stay at home
- Visit the [SBS website](#) for information translated into 63 languages
- Visit the [Queenslanders with a Disability Network](#) for helpful tools
- Visit the [Queensland Government's website](#) for information for First Nations people
- Visit the [Australian and New Zealand Society of Nephrology webpage](#) for Frequently Asked Questions for patients with kidney disease, having dialysis or with kidney transplants

Kidney appointments

Your renal service is providing additional care and support for all patients during this time including minimising the need for you to physically visit the hospital or kidney clinic. You may be offered appointments by phone or by telehealth. If you have any concerns, questions about appointments, or need information, please call your renal service. If you have symptoms that suggest COVID-19 infection, please contact your renal service for advice regarding testing and any needs for extra support of your kidney disease. We also advise you to self-isolate (stay at home, do not go out) until you receive your test result, if you have had a COVID-19 test. If your symptoms worsen at home, please go to your nearest fever clinic (contact numbers below, please ring before you go) or your emergency department if you become very unwell.

Haemodialysis patients

Haemodialysis staff will be providing additional care and precautions for all patients during this time. If your dialysis shift time or location needs to be changed, your dialysis unit will be in contact. If you have any concerns, questions about appointments, transportation issues, or need information, please call your dialysis unit.

If you are unwell, please remember to call your dialysis unit first before coming in for dialysis to help them give you the best care when you arrive. If you have symptoms and a history that suggests COVID-19 infection, you will be tested. You will be contacted when your test results are available. This may take up to 48 hours but may be slightly longer. Whilst waiting for your test result, your dialysis unit will still provide you with all your usual care needs but will take extra precautions to help protect the other patients, staff and visitors in the dialysis unit. This could include having your dialysis in isolation. If you are otherwise well, you may go home after dialysis. At home we advise you to self-isolate (stay at home, do not go out) until you receive your test result. If your symptoms worsen at home, please go to your nearest fever clinic (contact numbers below, please ring before you go) or your emergency department if you become very unwell.

If you are on haemodialysis and have confirmed COVID-19 your dialysis care will continue, although your dialysis unit will take extra precautions to help protect the other patients, staff and visitors in the unit. This could include having your dialysis done in isolation or dialysing with other patients who have also tested positive for COVID-19.

Home dialysis patients (home haemodialysis or peritoneal dialysis)

Your home dialysis staff will be providing additional care and support for all home patients during this time. If you have any concerns, questions about appointments, or need information, please call your home therapy unit. If you have symptoms that suggest COVID-19 infection, please contact your home therapy unit for advice regarding testing and any needs for extra support of your home dialysis. We advise you to self-isolate (stay at home, do not go out) until you receive your test result, if you have had a COVID-19 test. If your symptoms worsen at home, please go to your nearest fever clinic (contact numbers below, please ring before you go) or your emergency department if you become very unwell.

Kidney transplant patients

Your transplant staff will also be providing additional care and precautions for all transplant patients during this time, including minimising the need for you to physically visit the transplant clinic. You may be offered appointments by phone or by telehealth. If you have any concerns, questions about appointments, or need information, please call your renal service. Please remember to continue your medications as directed. If you have symptoms or have concerns, please contact your nearest fever clinic (contact numbers below, please ring before you go), your transplant unit for advice, or your emergency department if you become very unwell.

Your Renal Service contact number(s):

Your nearest Fever Clinic(s):

Version	Author	Date approved by CSLF	Changes	Proposed Review Date
1.0	Statewide Renal Network	13 August 2020	First approved version	13 November 2020
1.1	Statewide Renal Clinical Network		COVID-19 and vaccination information (as at 11/5/21)	November 2021