

MEDIA RELEASE



**WA Primary
Health Alliance**
Better health, together

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PERTH NORTH, PERTH SOUTH,
COUNTRY WA
An Australian Government Initiative

Your health matters - see your GP

01 May 2020

Regular healthcare needs don't stop during a pandemic. But some general practices in Western Australia are reporting a drop in patient numbers, believed to be related to COVID-19 fears.

WA Primary Health Alliance's See Your GP campaign is designed to remind consumers of the importance of regular medical appointments and reassure them of the availability of safe, essential health care.

It emphasises that it's more important than ever for Western Australians to prioritise their health and get the treatment, prescriptions and screening they need.

GPs and the wider medical community are also worried that critical health conditions may go undiagnosed and untreated, resulting in life-threatening complications for some people.

Federal Minister for Indigenous Australians, and Member for Hasluck, the Hon. Ken Wyatt, said it was important any Western Australian who needed to see a GP did not put this off.

"After listening to the concerns of GPs and the community, the Australian Government rapidly put in place a number of measures to protect and support Australians, but particularly those most vulnerable to COVID-19.

"Medicare-subsidised telehealth services for all Australians limit unnecessary exposure of patients and health professionals to COVID-19, wherever treatment can be safely delivered by phone or videoconferencing.

"Australia's primary health workers are our frontline during this pandemic. This means they can continue to practice safely, and people can still see their GP, if they are socially isolating or concerned about leaving home.

North Perth GP, Dr Belinda Wozencroft said while Australians had embraced social distancing, for some, this has translated into a real fear of attending their local GP if they are unwell or to follow up their long-term chronic health issues.

"GPs are working hard on two fronts to keep their patients safe. Firstly, consults via telehealth are being widely used for keeping in touch with patients, and many issues can be managed safely this way.

"However, not all health issues are amenable to telehealth and some people will need to come into their GP practices to be seen and examined.

"Practices are ensuring they are safe for patients and staff with readily available hand gel, ensuring patients can maintain a safe distance from each other, and careful cleaning.

WA Primary Health Alliance Chair, Dr Richard Choong, also a GP, said now, more than ever, people needed to stay in touch with their doctor.

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"Our message is clear – we are here to help, and we will keep you safe.

"You can now visit your doctor online, on the telephone or in person and we will ensure that your health is our number one priority.

"Please, don't put off visiting your doctor. If you maintain your regular doctor's appointments, you can stay as healthy and well as possible."

The campaign also focuses on the importance of having chronic conditions such as heart disease, diabetes and asthma regularly monitored, and not missing out on immunisations and regular health checks like those required during pregnancy.

General practice is open and safe to visit in person, and while some things might look a little different on arrival, changes such as social distancing in the waiting room, screens at reception, some staff wearing masks or being asked to wait in your car until your appointment time, are all designed to keep everyone safe and well.

If a prescription is needed, your GP can send a digital image of the prescription to your local pharmacy, to authorise dispensing, with some people also able to benefit from free home delivery.

So, don't put off getting a check on your health, or the health of those you care for.

Your health matters, so #SeeYourGP.

ENDS

FOR EDITORS: The campaign is supported by social media posts, videos and a flyer, all available to download <https://thesocialpresskit.com/seeyourgp>

Media Contact: Fiona Clark, 0437 563 735, fiona.clark@wapha.org.au

About Us: WA Primary Health Alliance shapes, strengthens and sustains a health system that works for people. As the operator of WA's three Primary Health Networks – part of the Australian Government national PHN program – we plan, guide and direct investment towards important primary healthcare services. Our state-wide structure and strong partnerships give us an opportunity to shape a health system fit for the future. By partnering with GPs, allied health professionals, service providers, government and community, we deliver better health, together. For more information, visit www.wapha.org.au