

Management of Vulnerable Healthcare Workers - Covid-19

- On 1 April 2020 The Ministry provided advice to NSW Health in regard to implementation within Health Agencies of the Prime Minister's strong advice on 29 March 2020 that all vulnerable people should self-isolate.
- The Ministry confirmed the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC)'s position has been adopted as the current definition of who are vulnerable workers in relation to COVID-19.
- AHPPC's advice is that people aged over **70 years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over 50 years and non-Indigenous people over 65 years with chronic health conditions and people of any age with significant immunosuppression, are at greater risk** of more serious illness if they are infected with coronavirus. The most updated AHPPC advice on vulnerable people and relevant chronic medical conditions is found [here](#).
- **Currently pregnancy is not included by the AHPPC. However, having regard to the advice provided by RANZCOG [certain circumstances](#) can be considered** (see pg 3).
- When risk assessing an individual vulnerable health worker's status, Public Health advise the following factors should be considered:
 - Whether the worker meets the AHPPC criteria for people at risk of serious illness;
 - The nature of the duration, frequency and closeness of the worker's interaction with patients;
 - Whether the worker is trained in and able to effectively use recommended PPE when in contact with patients; and
 - The opportunity for alternative work to be performed in the workplace or through access to flexible working practices could reduce the employee's exposure to COVID-19
- WSLHD will assist staff who identify as a vulnerable healthcare worker to assess their risk and put in place strategies to assist them to reduce the risk that they face through their employment.
- The attached risk assessment tool should be used to identify risk based on personal characteristics, the type and location of the staff member's work and the ability for that risk to be reduced or mitigated through alternative arrangements.
- In regard to chronic medical conditions and low immunity staff are not compelled to disclose the exact condition, however it is encouraged since the nature of the illness may affect the alternative arrangements that can be put into place. Alternatively the staff member's normal treating doctor can certify in writing or via a medical certificate that the staff member is affected by a medical condition listed in the AHPPC advice and the recommended mitigation strategy
- Alternative work arrangements may include re-deployment to a safer environment in the workplace, work from home performing the staff members normal duties, or work from home performing alternate duties
- The use of assistant technology such as Skype and Telehealth should be considered for staff isolating at work or at home. For example, meetings, ward rounds, patient consultations may be able to become virtual rather than in person
- If different PPE arrangements are to be used, the advice of Infection Control or Public Health may be sought
- Where there is doubt about the healthcare workers vulnerability the matter can be referred to senior management or the advice of Human Resources or Public Health may be sought
- If a vulnerable healthcare worker elects to take leave consideration of the request should be made taking into account all of the circumstances, to come to a balanced decision

Risk Assessment – Vulnerable Healthcare Worker – Covid 19

Please fill in the risk assessment and indicate which part of the [AHPPC advice](#) you meet. Discuss your application with you manager. Please also supply any supportive medical evidence that you have. If you need assistance to calculate your medication dose against the dosages in the AHPPC advice please take a photo of the pharmacy dispensing sticker with the dosage on it and contact your manager or Human Resources. For pregnancy related applications supportive evidence must be provided by your obstetrician/share care GP (see page 3).

Staff Member's Name: **Stafflink No:**.....

Consideration		Comment/Information (include mitigation factors, if any)
1	Professional/work role FT PT casual	
2	Work location/service/patient type	
3	Part of a business critical service/role	
4	Transport to work <input type="checkbox"/> Own <input type="checkbox"/> Shared/public	
5	Self-Disclosed Risk factor/s <input type="checkbox"/> > 70 years of age <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal person >50 years of age <input type="checkbox"/> with chronic medical condition/s <input type="checkbox"/> >65 years of age with chronic medical condition/s <input type="checkbox"/> Any age with impaired immune system <input type="checkbox"/> Pregnancy (please see page 3 first)	
6	Any medical or other supporting information	
7	Ability to reduce the risk through the use of PPE or self isolation on site at work	
8	Ability to relocate to a ward/service with a lower risk profile or non-clinical work	
9	Ability to use Skype, Telehealth or similar to perform their normal role at home or another work location	
10	Willing to temporarily perform alternate duties at home or at another work location	

Comments and consultation	
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Assessor Name: Recommendation: Signed: Designation: Date:	Tier 3/GM name: Supported / not supported Signed: Designation: Date:
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Completed risk assessments, signed by the Tier 3/GM, must be forwarded to
WSLHD-PeopleandCulture@health.nsw.gov.au

Pregnancy & Covid 19

Currently pregnancy is not included as a vulnerability factor by the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC).

The current advice of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (RANZCOG) is that *“At this time, pregnant women do not appear to be more severely unwell if they develop COVID-19 infection than the general population. It is expected that the large majority of pregnant women will experience only mild or moderate cold/flu like symptoms.”*

Please see the president of RANZCOG message to pregnant women and their families. Following the statement there is a FAQ about the effects of Covid19 on pregnancy, birth and breastfeeding and a list of resources including health advice provided to pregnant employees and patients in the NHS (UK)

<https://ranzcog.edu.au/statements-guidelines/covid-19-statement/information-for-pregnant-women>

Discuss this information with your obstetrician or share care GP to establish your own risk profile. If it is determined that you are at risk due to the stage of your pregnancy or existing or pregnancy induced conditions and need to be moved to a safe job or isolation, please ask for a letter to this effect for the hospital/service.

Submit the letter along with your application and discuss it with your manager. There are Award conditions that may also apply in respect to 'safe' jobs for pregnant employee and so you may also wish to speak to your Human Resources Business Partner.