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Revision history

Version	Date	Changes
1.0	December 2021	New document
1.1	December 2021	Updated exposure risk matrix and management of exposure
1.2	February 2022	Updated links to exposure risk matrix and risk assessment for workplace settings
1.3	March 2022	Updated link for clients/patients and carers exposed to COVID-19 in the waiting room

Introduction

This document is designed to support healthcare services in the community to risk assess COVID-19 exposures in their own practice facilities. It is intended for use by healthcare services in the community including general practices, specialist medical, dental, allied health, alternative health practices, chiropractors, optometrists, imaging, psychologists, counsellors, acupuncture, traditional medicine and remedial massage.

Healthcare practices are considered to be at high risk of transmission of COVID-19. In addition, they are considered different to general workplace settings due to the potential susceptibility of patients, the duty of care related to providing health services and the recommended use of controls in place including Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

When a person with COVID-19 attends the premises during their infectious period as a staff member, client/patient or carer, a risk assessment should be undertaken. Exposures can occur during individual clinical consultations, in group scenarios and whilst in non-clinical settings such as a waiting room.

It is important to follow the appropriate actions outlined in this document to minimise the risk of further COVID-19 transmission. For NSW Health care services/facilities refer to the [Healthcare Worker COVID-19 Exposure Risk Assessment Matrix](#). If you have queries that cannot be addressed when utilising the tools in this document, please contact your local Public Health Unit (PHU) on 1300 066 055.

Assessing the risk following a COVID-19 exposure

A risk assessment should be undertaken when a community healthcare service becomes aware that a COVID-19 positive staff member, client/patient or carer has attended the premises during their infectious period. The infectious period is either 48 hours before the case's symptom onset until the present, or if the case is asymptomatic, 48 hours before the positive test until the present.

The community healthcare service is responsible for undertaking the risk assessment. The level of risk will determine the actions required by the practice/ facility and those exposed to the COVID-19 case(s).

Links to relevant risk matrices are provided to assist the community healthcare service to assess the risk following exposure to the COVID-19 case(s).

When performing a risk assessment, it is important to capture all people who may have been exposed to the COVID-19 case(s) during the infectious period. This includes all clinical and non-clinical staff members, clients/patients and carers. A non-clinical staff member is someone who is not directly involved in the treatment of the client/patient and may include receptionists, delivery drivers and cleaning staff. Exposures may occur in, but are not limited to, clinical settings, staff common areas, meal break rooms and waiting rooms.

1. Information needed to perform the risk assessment

- Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) by case and contact(s)
- Proximity and duration with the COVID-19 case
- Aerosol generating behaviours (AGB) and aerosol generating procedures (AGP), where a patient is the case
- Size of waiting room (where a patient or carer is the case)

2. Risk assessment for practice staff exposures and clients/patients and carers exposed in a clinical setting

Please use the [Healthcare Worker COVID-19 Exposure Risk Assessment Matrix](#) to assess the level of risk for exposed staff members (clinical and non-clinical) and client/patients and carers exposed in a clinical setting. This includes staff to staff contact in common areas and meal break rooms.

3. Risk assessment for clients/patients and carers exposed in the waiting room

Please use [Information for people exposed to COVID-19](#) to assess exposures and risk management for clients/patients and carers exposed in the waiting room.

4. Actions for the healthcare facility

The healthcare facility is responsible for providing advice to:

- All practice staff that are identified as high, moderate or low risk (Appendix A)
- All clients/patients and carers that are identified as high or moderate risk (Appendix B)

Healthcare facilities have a responsibility to [notify SafeWork NSW](#) if a worker has contracted COVID-19 or is likely to have contracted COVID-19 at the workplace and

- has been hospitalised due to COVID-19
- has died as a result of contracting COVID-19 at work.

5. Cleaning and potential closure of premises

Following a confirmed COVID-19 case, an additional enhanced clean is recommended in areas of the practice based on identified case movements. This meets the requirement for environmental decontamination in the presence of a case and transmission of COVID-19 within a healthcare facility. Individuals who have been in close contact with a COVID-19 case are at highest risk of becoming infected. Environmental contamination leading to SARS-COV-2 transmission is unlikely to occur. NSW Health does not require that a specialist cleaning company be used. Healthcare practices can use the cleaning guidelines listed in the [Safe Work Australia link](#).

Appendix A – Email template to send all practice staff, clinical and non-clinical (high, moderate and low risk)

Dear (NAME),

Please be advised that you have recently been exposed to somebody with COVID-19 at your workplace while they were infectious on (date).

Based on the risk assessment the exposure is considered (*insert high, moderate or low risk*). Please follow [Information for people exposed to COVID-19](#)

If you experience any COVID-19 symptoms, please immediately seek a rapid antigen test (or if unavailable, go to a testing clinic) and self-isolate until you receive a negative result.

If you become unwell during this time please contact your GP via phone, or if it is a medical emergency, you should phone 000. Please advise your GP or the ambulance operator that you have had contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19.

Thank you for helping keep NSW Safe.

Appendix B – Client/patient or carer correspondence (high or moderate risk)

Dear (NAME),

Please be advised that you have recently been at a venue/premises at the same time as person with infectious COVID-19 on (date).

Based on the risk assessment the exposure is considered (*insert high or moderate risk*). Please follow [Information for people exposed to COVID-19](#)

If you experience any COVID-19 symptoms, please immediately seek a rapid antigen test (or if unavailable, go to a testing clinic) and self-isolate until you receive a negative result.

If you become unwell during this time, please contact your GP via phone, or if it is a medical emergency, you should phone 000. Please advise your GP or the ambulance operator that you have had contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19.

Thank you for helping keep NSW Safe.

Appendix C – Useful resources and support

Resource links	Support during isolation
Guidance for businesses with a worker who tests positive for COVID-19	Emergency Care Call 000
Information for people exposed to COVID-19	Contacting your local Public Health Unit 1300 066 055
NSW Health COVID-19 self-isolation guideline and support	Service NSW- Essential food or medication support 13 77 88
Information for people exposed to COVID-19	Other non-urgent health related questions 1800 943 553
Getting tested for COVID-19	Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment
Testing positive to COVID-19 and managing COVID-19 safely at home	NSW Mental Health Line 1800 011 511

Clinical Excellence Commission (CEC) COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control Manual	Beyond Blue 1800 512 348
Safe Work Australia cleaning guidance	Lifeline 13 11 14
Department of Health- CDNA Guidelines	Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800
	National sexual assault and domestic violence helpline (1800 RESPECT) 1800 737 732