



Burning out or breathing in: *Getting through COVID-19 as a GP and health professional*
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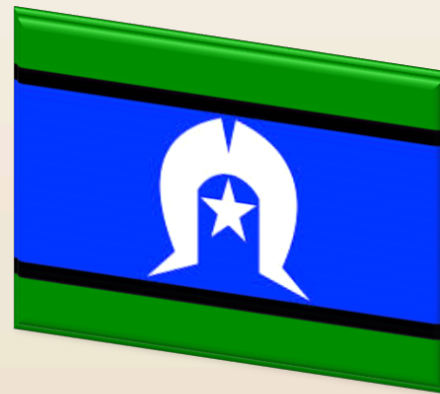
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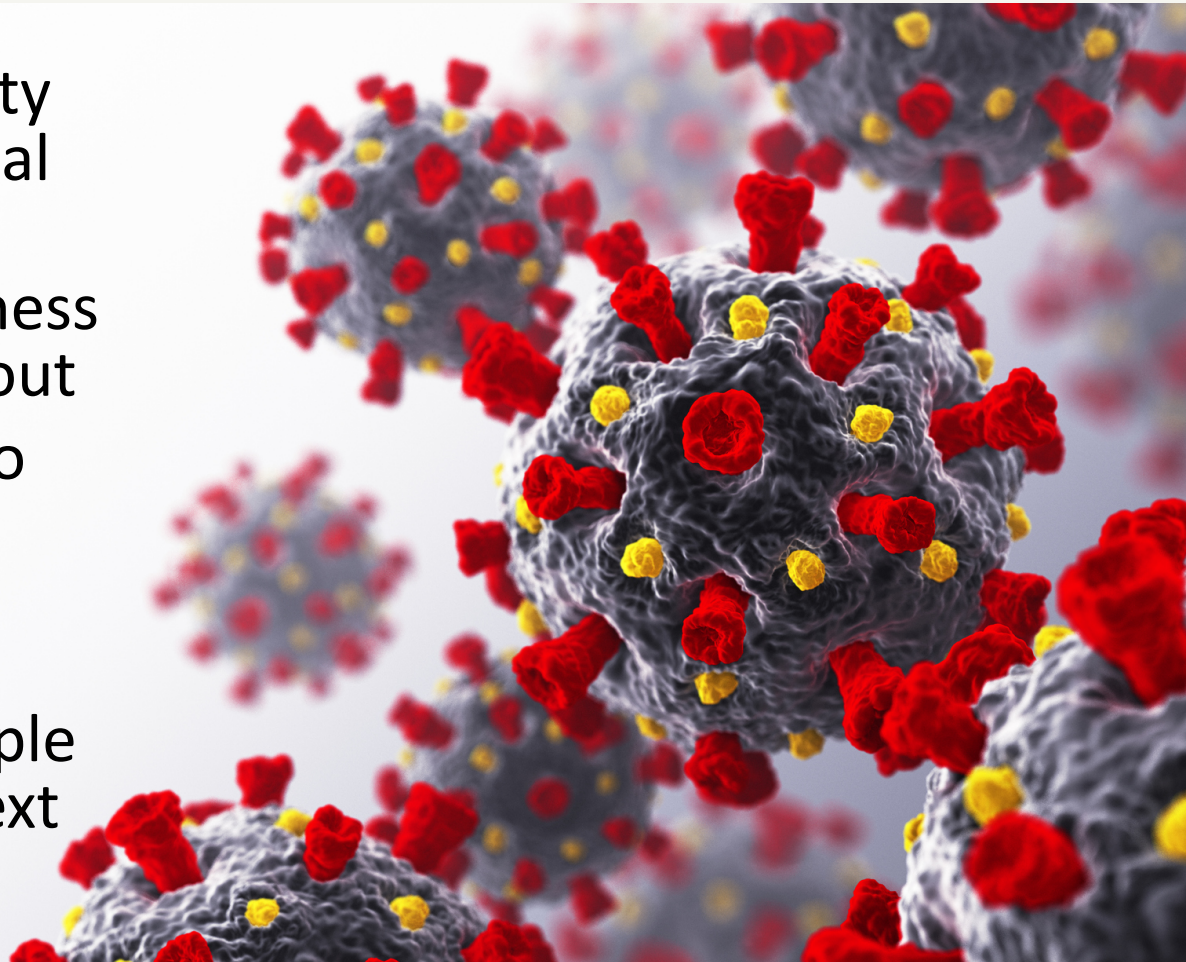
Acknowledgement of Country

The Sydney North Health Network (SNHN) and the Australian Psychological Society (APS) wish to acknowledge Australia's Aboriginal people as the custodians of this lands on which our webinar presenters and participants are located. We pay our respect and recognise their unique cultures and customs and honour their Elders past, present and future.



Topics

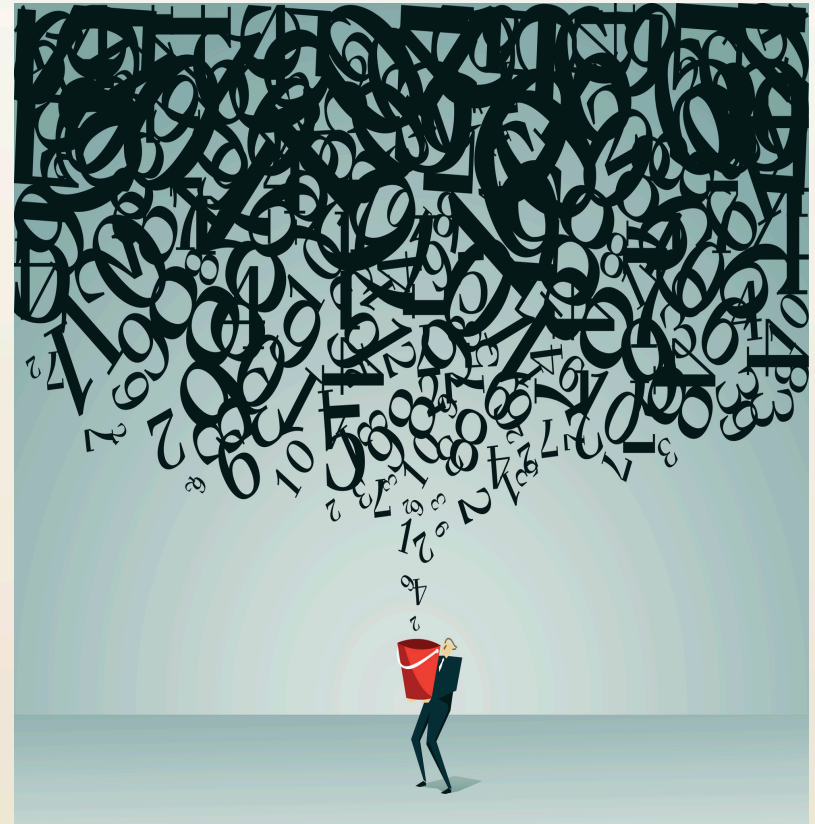
1. Managing uncertainty and the small physical world
2. Increase self-awareness of anxiety and burnout
3. Develop strategies to manage anxiety, frustration and fear
4. Managing tricky responses from people in this difficult context



1. Managing uncertainty & the small physical world

The COVID-19 Context for HCWs

- COVID-19 is a chronic disaster & HCWs are sprinting in this marathon
- Endurance running → dealing with discomfort (suffering better)
- Extraordinary, unprecedented in Australian context and pervasive strain on health workers → difficult to maintain balance
- Increased risk of poor MH outcomes
- Risk mitigation → HCWs are integral
- Your wellbeing is critical



1. Managing uncertainty & the small physical world

The COVID-19 Context for HCWs

- Psychologically what does this mean for us?
 - We can't maintain our usual Professional and Personal Boundaries
 - A lot of what is occurring is outside of our control
 - Constant change in knowledge and requirements makes perfection impossible
 - There is a lot that can't be known, so there is uncertainty
 - There is genuine threat to HCW life
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1. Managing uncertainty & the small physical world

Why are we here? Stress Recap

Stress

external pressure
and internal
triggers with
physiological,
psychological and
behavioural
impacts



1. Managing uncertainty & the small physical world

COVID-19 and your bucket

Reflect on your day....

How has COVID-19 added to your bucket?

i.e. system pressures, added fears, personal pressures, professional pressures and fears, financial, telehealth, home-schooling, altered decision making, information overload.

How has COVID-19 frustrated or changed your outlet taps?

i.e. new ways to manage, exercise, nutrition, sleep, routine, overexposure to negative experiences, relationships and social changes.

1. Managing uncertainty & the small physical world

Shared stressors for HCWs during COVID-19 crisis

- Increased work demands/hours/shifts/reporting/decision making/risk to self/conflict management/target of aggression, not enough time, lack of PPE, change in job structure and tasks (telehealth),
 - Fear of death/dying/infecting others/having to make life or death decisions/making a mistake
 - Increased pressure at home, relationship strain, home-schooling, caring responsibilities, social disconnection, financial pressure, inability for time-out, isolation
 - Community pressure/anxiety/fear/aggression/ill-informed/reactiveness/"selfishness", increased demand for updates from family/friends
 - Lack of control, loss of familiar processes and structures, uncertainty, constant change, too much information to assimilate.
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1. Managing uncertainty & the small physical world

Shared stressors for HCWs during COVID-19 crisis

- ***Fear, uncertainty and anxious feelings are stressors***
 - Real fears both personally and professionally that are pervasive and intrusive across all areas of life..... such as.....?
 - Uncertain environment
 - Information overload & constant change
 - Demand to assimilate information accurately and quickly
 - Exponential increase in the number of things to focus on and make decisions about
 - Feeling anxious is feeling fear and is associated with a lowered tolerance for uncertainty
 - If left unchecked, stress can lead to burnout which is a chronic response characterised by slow emotional disengagement
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2. Increase self-awareness of anxiety and burnout

Recognise signs of stress during the crisis

- The “new normal” – reflect and recalibrate
 - COVID-19 requires adaption in all areas of your life e.g. health, relationships, social connections, caring
 - “Normal” for people to have symptoms of stress every now and again
 - Look out for a persistent negative change in functioning or inability to adapt
 - repeated symptoms → repeated uncharacteristic or changed behaviours
 - duration of symptoms -- > 2 weeks (acute or chronic)
 - number of co-occurring symptoms
 - intensity of symptoms over time and compared to normal functioning
 - Symptoms will vary greatly from person to person
 - If symptoms are intense or persistent and uncharacteristic then it's time to take action
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2. Increase self-awareness of anxiety and burnout

STRESS SYMPTOM



2. Increase self-awareness of anxiety and burnout

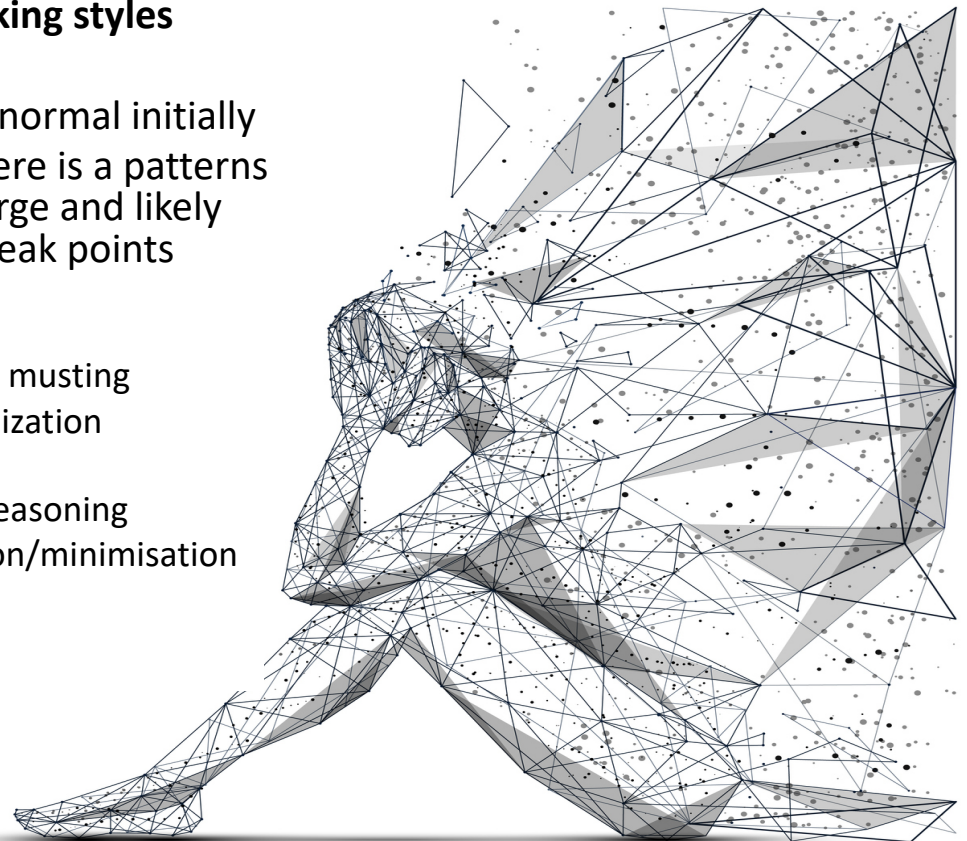
Recognise signs of stress during the crisis

Cognitive distortions *aka* unhelpful thinking styles

- Likely think the thinking changes are normal initially
- When under stress or strain often there is a patterns of unhelpful thinking styles that emerge and likely simultaneously – your own unique weak points

These include:

- Mental filter (“tunnel vision”),
- Jumping to conclusions
- Personalization,
- Catastrophizing,
- Black & white thinking
- Shoulding & musting
- Overgeneralization
- Labelling
- Emotional reasoning
- Magnification/minimisation



2. Increase self-awareness of anxiety and burnout

Detecting cognitive distortions

Examples:

- “If I don’t get this right, I am going to mess the whole thing up”
- “I should have thought about this before COVID-19”
- “I am not doing all the things I need to to make this work best”
- “I messed up yesterday by not finishing that paperwork, what if something goes wrong”
- “I am useless at this telehealth, I don’t know what I am doing”
- “There’s no way I can sustain this job how we have to now”
- “I am constantly making mistakes and not getting things done properly”
- “It was a great day but I messed up by not doing XYZ”
- “I’ve let my whole team/family down with what I have done”
- “I cannot provide for my family anymore”
- “I can’t keep on top of everything anymore, the kids are going to suffer”
- “I am going to cause harm to everyone by just doing the job I’m doing, it puts others at risk”
- “My parents are not going to survive this social isolation”
- “I just can’t get things done properly anymore, I’m not cut out for this”
- “Those people are all the same, they’re so ill-informed and don’t get it”

CHALLENGE THE EVIDENCE

2. Increase self-awareness of anxiety and burnout

Stress VERSUS Burnout

Stress	Burnout
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over-engagement (increased emotional attachment, over-empathizing, inability to disconnect) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dis-engagement (decreased/low emotional attachment, less empathy, increased cynicism)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overreactive emotional responses (increased emotional expression/outbursts, increased frustration, out of character, up and down) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blunted emotions (emotional exhaustion, decreased emotional expression, out of character, flat affect)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sense of urgency and hyperactivity (physiological over arousal such as increased HR, trembling and pressured speech, subjective feelings of not getting things done, overloading, overworking, feeling pressured) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sense of hopelessness and helplessness (physiological under arousal, subjective feelings of “what’s the point” and powerlessness, disinterest, lower productivity)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of energy (fatigue, more tired than usual, sleeping problems, physical complaints) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of motivation (lower level of pleasure or enjoyment in the work, feeling incompetent)
What does stress look like in your life?	What does burnout look like in your life?

3. Develop strategies to manage anxiety, frustration and fear

Examine values

- Values are the basic building blocks of your psychology
 - The environment has changed and all our lives will be impacted
 - Looking around there are few Australians that are not suffering
 - This includes your finances and ability to provide for yourself and your family
 - Suffering better is the key, thriving is unrealistic
 - Examine your values and what is important to you, including why you decided to enter your profession
 - The government has implemented ways to provide financial support, but this is not to ensure you sustain life the way it was, it's to ensure you can get through this and carry on once it's over
 - This is a temporary situation, not a permanent one, acceptance is important
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3. Develop strategies to manage anxiety, frustration and fear

Managing cognitions

- Your values will inform your priorities at a time when you can not do it all, when you will make more mistakes than usual and the risks are higher.
 - Choose your priorities and allow yourself to be less demanding of the rest. Set limits and boundaries.
 - Not everyone will like you or agree with you - Build in consultation with those you trust
 - Ground yourself in today and what can be known and done – don't look too far ahead into uncertainty
 - Look for the signs that remind you who you are and that you're capable
 - You can't rescue everyone
 - This too will end!
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3. Develop strategies to manage anxiety, frustration and fear

Prevention strategies

- Implement self-care strategies: physical, emotional and psychological
 - Adapt to current environment → innovation is needed
 - Cognitive flexibility is a key (i.e. thinking outside the box)
 - Building blocks: sleep, nutrition, exercise, switch off
 - Peer support (providing and receiving) – sitting with and being understood
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3. Develop strategies to manage anxiety, frustration and fear

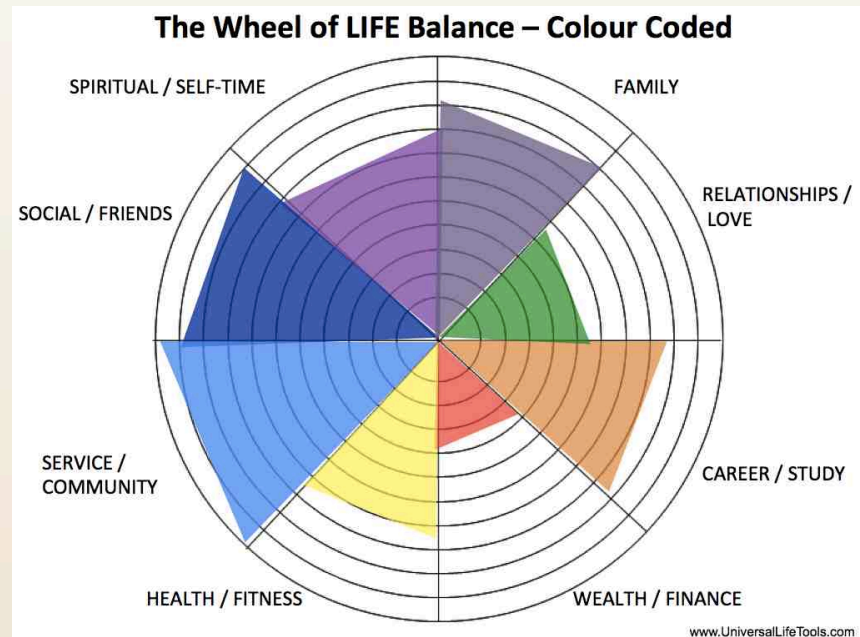
Some typical strategies

1. **Self-compassion:** Your human too and emotions such as anxiety, frustration and fear are normal. Difficult to disconnect and need to be gentle with selves and refocus on the things you can control. [CCI workbook and Information sheets](#)
 2. **Harness the power of the pause:** For example, frustrations will happen, pause-sit in it-delay your response
 3. **Prioritise the the essential building blocks to keep you well:** Sleep, nutrition, exercise and relaxation
 4. **Unwind:** Take time to unwind. Even when you don't think you have time!
 5. **Distraction:** Find distractions throughout the day to take a mental break.
 6. **Connection:** Stay socially connected while physically distancing.
 7. **Reach out:** ask for help, choose support choose wisely.
 8. **Use trusted sources of information:** You need to know facts or news updates, know the credible sources of information.
 9. **Limit exposure:** Sometimes not possible at work but it is at home. Friends and family updates: use the broadcast message to limit exposure to constant discussions.
 10. **Refocus on resilience and kindness – altruism is rife!**
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3. Develop strategies to manage anxiety, frustration and fear

Managing change adaptively

- Identify areas where you are required or have been required to adapt due to COVID-19
- What are the goals, what are the challenges and how can you address them?
- Write down and set goals for adaption
- Establish a time frame
- Get help, delegate, keep a routine i.e. social media, emental health, working out at home, navigating parenting and relationships in an era restriction, managing “cabin fever”
- This will not solve all problems, but it will help you get through this time



3. Develop strategies to manage anxiety, frustration and fear

Red flags for escalating help-seeking for yourself and others

- Suicide ideation/homicidal ideation/self-harm
- Increased anger or aggression
- Impulsive risk-taking behaviors, including substance use
- Reports from colleagues, friends or family noticing changes in you or others
- Barriers to help-seeking among health professionals

What to do when things worsen

- Reach out
- Get professional help
- Take strong action



3. Develop strategies to manage anxiety, frustration and fear

Acknowledging mortality

- Fear of death
 - Facing own risk of mortality
 - Facing death around you
 - Facing risk of loved ones dying
 - Accept the risk, easier said than done
 - Focus on what you can control and make these choices
 - Talk it through with others – you're not an island
 - Know when death anxiety becomes problematic
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4. Managing tricky responses from people in this difficult context

Why?

Tricky situations

- Due to COVID-19 there have been increased acts of aggression and conflict
 - These happen both within and outside of the workplace For example confrontations in supermarket, aggression towards people in uniform, requiring COVID-19 testing etc.
 - Mostly driven by fear, anxiety and frustration (sound familiar)
 - Depersonalise these moments but also recognise that this will be increased, as will random acts of kindness
 - Having a framework for responding in these situations will help you manage them more productively
 - In the workplace, check your protocols for these situations
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4. Managing tricky responses from people in this difficult context

DRABCD repurposed

- **Danger:** Safety of yourself and others first
 - **Response:** Calm breeds calm, check yourself first, non-verbal speaks louder than the words you use
 - **Active Listening:** hear them out, listen to understand, demonstrate empathy
 - **Boundaries:** assertively set boundaries, reframe towards the problem not the person, unless there is danger ultimatums/threats are unhelpful
 - **Conflict resolution:** Suggest resolutions, provide options, take responsibility for what you can do, restate their responsibility for jointly solving the problem and the need for compromise
 - **Debrief:** debrief with others and ensure others including the difficult person is debriefed where appropriate (work only, not public)
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Wrap up

- Foster resilience, this will end but your perspective will be important
- Remember how to play and have fun
 - Being silly
 - Watching comedy
 - Sense of humour
- Look for kindness and keep the balance
 - Facebook pages: the kindness pandemic, bin isolation outing etc.
 - Remember that our community is celebrating the work of health professionals out there
 - Even Sharon aka “Magda Szubanski”



[Watch Sharons #ISO video
for health workers](#)

Any questions so far?



Resources and Links

- [DRS4DRS](#): An independent program that provides confidential support to doctors and medical students across Australia.
 - [RACGP GP Support Program](#): Free, confidential specialist advice to help GPs cope.
 - [Nurse & Midwife Support](#): A 24/7 national support service for nurses and midwives that provides access to confidential advice and referral.
 - [Beyond Blue](#): On the frontline: how healthcare workers can support themselves and each other
 - [This Way Up](#): A joint initiative between St Vincent's Hospital Sydney and UNSW, it is one of Australia's leading evidence-based online program providers for anxiety, depressive disorders and physical health
 - [Australian Psychological Society](#): Access tip sheets for managing MH during COVID-19, other mental health resources and access to the [Find a Psychologist](#) service
 - [Centre for Clinical Interventions](#): Guided and evidence-based self-help programs, including for developing self-compassion
 - Financial information: Department of Treasury has some excellent information about the economic stimulus to support business [Support for Businesses](#) and the [Coronavirus Business Liaison Unit](#). Additionally the [ATO](#) has information including about the [JobKeeper](#) program
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HealthPathways

A WAY FORWARD



HealthPathways is an online health information website which supports GPs, hospital doctors, allied health and other clinicians.

HealthPathways supports:

- ✓ Condition management
- ✓ Service navigation
- ✓ Referral to specialists, facilities, public and private services
- ✓ Access to reference materials
- ✓ Access to patient educational resources



Health
Northern Sydney
Local Health District



Patient benefits

- ◆ Improved coordination of care
- ◆ Referral to specialists when appropriate

Clinician benefits

- ◆ Better communication with primary care and hospital services
- ◆ Clearer management options

Local Health District benefits

- ◆ Hospital avoidance due to better managed care in the community
- ◆ Appropriate use of tertiary resources

Sydney North HealthPathways Snapshot

March 2020

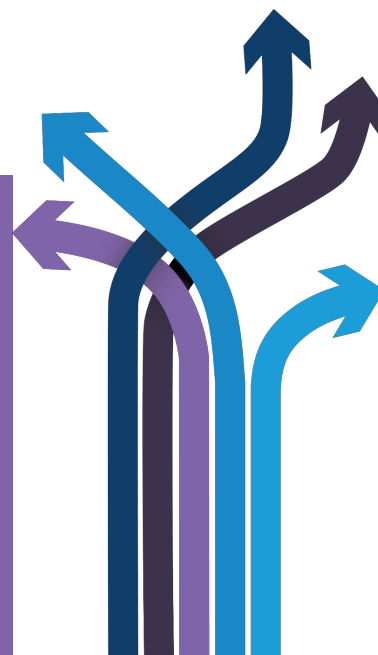
Launched May 2017

366 Pathways live

50 Pathways in progress

4051 Average page views per month

5043 Accumulative new users




Health
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Sydney North HealthPathways

Community HealthPathways Sydney North







Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Information

COVID-19 (new name for the disease caused by SARS-CoV-2) is a recently identified strain of coronavirus in humans. It was previously known as 'novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV)' and first appeared in Wuhan city in Hubei Province, China. For current outbreak information in this rapidly evolving situation, visit the World Health Organization (WHO) – [Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\) Outbreak](#) .

Coronaviruses:

- Are very common viruses found worldwide in humans and animals.
- Cause respiratory disease, including common colds, but are also responsible for Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).
- Are readily transmitted, minimise transmission by practising simple hygiene measures:
 - Cover coughs and sneezes.
 - Wash hands thoroughly.

For further information, see:

- NSW Health:
 - [COVID-19](#)  – for latest updates, facts, information for health professionals, and resources
 - [Infectious Disease Alerts](#)  – for latest health alerts and advice for general practitioners
- Department of Health:
 - [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) 
 - [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Resources for Health Professionals, Including Pathology Providers and Healthcare Managers](#) 
- RACGP – [Coronavirus Information for GPs](#) 
- Clinical Excellence Commission – [Infection Prevention and Control: Novel Coronavirus 2019 \(2019-nCoV\) – Primary and Community Care](#) 

<https://sydneynorth.communityhealthpathways.org/723535.htm>

Primary care username:
healthpathways

Primary care password:
gateway

NEXT STEPS



- ◆ Login to the HealthPathways website and available localised pathways
- ◆ Install the HealthPathways desktop icon
- ◆ Start using HealthPathways in your practice
- ◆ Use the floating feedback button.



Send Feedback





SYDNEY NORTH HealthPathways

For more information please contact

Email: healthpathways@snhn.org.au

sydneynorth.communityhealthpathways.org



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