



Independent Health Care Service

Newsletter

March 2020

G'day Everyone,

We have devoted the majority of this newsletter to attend to the coronavirus pandemic. Needless to say it is a massive concern and shows how following good infection control can prevent us, as practitioners of in-home care and support, from introducing pathogens that may be devastating to those we serve. Many of our clients are immunocompromised because they are frail aged or live with chronic conditions, or are undertaking immunosuppressant therapy. The application of standard and, where required, additional precautions represents the protective shield we can provide to our clients, colleagues and family.

As far as IHCS goes, we need to stay vigilant and up and running because we are meeting other people's needs. Part of this vigilance, as always, includes erring on the side of caution in relation to our own health. Staying well, but also staying home when you are ill. While providing service now requires extra mindfulness to infection control, I appreciate that many of you feel the financial uncertainty that extended time off work might mean. In this respect we will respond to your need, if it arises, to the greatest capacity our organisation can offer each other.

I invite you to read the 'Leave Account' article below. In it I introduce a longer term leave support to the majority of you who are receiving casually loaded pay rates. It has been thought about for some time, now seems to be the time to see what you think.

In this edition, we have decided to include some further information about other emergency situations, namely bushfire responses and an appeal to review whether any of our clients may need to be placed on our 'Emergency Evacuation Support Needed' register.

Fundamentally, our strategy for not bringing COVID-19 into the homes of our clients is twofold:

1. Do not visit clients if you are sick or have been in close contact with someone suffering COVID-19 and observe any quarantine or self-isolation requirements.
2. Wash your hands as soon as you enter each client's home.

Be vigilant thereon with applying standard precautions, you will be advised when additional precautions are required, and, as always, be observant to your client's needs and feel free to call the office with any concerns. Please read on for information we believe is important for you to know.

Finally, your employment is not in question, what we do is essential work. I completely understand that some of you have very real concerns about whether you should continue to work, and all of us need to consider the risks imposed by our individual circumstances. All of us are experiencing uncertainty and anxiety and this may be a great challenge for our will to work under these circumstances, I understand that too. However, we also need as many of you who can keep working to do so, this will involve exercising your courage and resolve in these testing times. I am sure that together, we will not be found wanting in continuing to meet the needs of our community.

Thank you all for your understanding and support, and as always thank you for all that you do.

Matthew



Standard Precautions

It is now a standard of our practice that every time you enter someone's home or premises, the first thing you do is wash your hands in soap and water. Standard precautions apply from there on. If you have any difficulty in achieving this in any particular place, please contact the office at your earliest convenience so we can work together to make sure you (and your clients) have the resources needed. I have written to our clients advising them of this requirement so that it becomes an expected part of our practice and an overt action that we can all take to demonstrate the care we have for those we serve.

I have included a copy of the letter clients received within this newsletter, so that you know what they have been advised of, and also because it has a succinct pictorial representation of when hand washing is required as standard precautions. Bear in mind the objects you might be taking into a client's home, particularly your phone – consider it as a possible common vessel and source of contamination, clean it regularly and if you use it while at a client's home always wash your hands afterwards.

Additional Precautions

Will come into play on an individual basis and will likely involve the use of additional PPE's, isolation and processes specific to the situation. If these types of additional precautions are required you will be advised. However, it is strongly recommended that you obtain the influenza vaccination this year once it becomes available – we will support the cost of this.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

I must advise you that we have limited PPE available to us and are working hard to source additional resources. So please be as conservative as possible with your use of PPE at the moment so that we have the resources available to us when we need them.



Our Work

Our work must endure but it will become difficult. While not being sure about anything, it is likely that we will experience a greater level of sick leave and clients reducing their level and exposure to services. At the same time it will be important to maintain the continuity of each client's direct care team and keep our movement of people between our clients to as low as possible.

Supporting Clients

It is very important that you closely observe the health of our clients and report any concerns of emerging illness as soon as possible. With the health system likely to become extremely stretched we will need to respond quickly in regards to any health concerns and conduct our own risk management of the illness, including the need to apply additional precautions for that individual and their attending personnel.

If you are helping clients with domestic assistance, please discuss your duties with your clients with the view of focusing on cleaning commonly touched surfaces, particularly those that are smooth and hard – such as door knobs and cupboard handles, light switches, remote controls and devices.

COVID-19 symptoms may develop within 14 days of exposure and include:

Useful Links:



Cough



Shortness of Breath



Fever

Department of Health:

<https://www.health.gov.au/>

Johns Hopkins Resource Centre:

<https://coronavirus.jhu.edu>

COVID-19 Infection Control Training
Department of Health:

<https://covid-19training.gov.au>

The Office

Our offices will also be effectively shut to all non-essential meetings and visitors. This means if you do not need to attend the office, then do not. Please only attend the office on essential business or when invited and wash your hands when you first come in. It is likely that we will start to control access to the building by triaging people's need to enter at the front door. As you can appreciate we need to keep the office operating, I can confirm that they are doing a phenomenal amount of work and they need to be protected as much as we can. To reduce your need to come to the office we can always post forms and other resources to you upon request. We will also make more resources available on our website.

Website: www.independenthealth.com.au

We will place some of the forms you use constantly on our website for you to access, such as timesheets, Report Forms and progressive file notes. We will also include the information we are sending out and receiving regarding COVID-19. Also, our *Infection Control Guidelines* will be placed on our website for your reference and I invite you to review these processes. Finally, we will use our site as a means to communicate our situation when the need arises.

Recognition Night

This night has been rescheduled for the 14th of October and we will see how things lie closer to that time. A massive thank you to Lynne for her work towards the night and we hope that this will eventually be an even greater celebration when the time comes. I might add that Lynne has also offered to become an operational employee again if the need arises. She is truly an exemplary person, one of many we are fortunate to call a colleague.

Leave Account

We have been working on offering a leave resource to those receiving casual loaded rates for some time now. Representing the majority of you who deliver our service, having no leave provisions is probably our greatest systemic barrier to good infection control. This is the tension between not being well enough to work but having to work because bills need to be paid. We have entered a period in which we just cannot carry on if feeling unwell, it represents an unacceptable risk to our clients and means you are more susceptible to contracting infection.

The leave account is a simple idea of providing you with an account in which you can insulate a portion of your net pay to be used later if you need to take leave. It provides for an automated saving rather than relying on your own personal discipline. For example, based on a very basic calculation, if you wished to save for 6 weeks leave (4weeks holiday and 2weeks personal/sick leave) over 48 weeks, you would need to insulate 12.5% of your net pay. However, just 5% over 52 weeks would save 2.6 weeks. You would choose how much you might like to save, we would deposit your money in a no-interest account, with maximum limits on how much can be saved and whatever money you save would always remain yours. If you are interested in further information regarding this please email:

leave.account@independenthealth.com.au

This, of course, is a longer term strategy. At the moment, as mentioned above, we will support each other with overcoming short term financial hardships that might arise in response to COVID-19.

In Conclusion

Finally, please focus on ensuring you and yours are staying as well as you can. Get enough sleep, drink lots of water and stay hydrated, eat well, stay active, and where applicable, drink less alcohol and smoke less. Be mindful of your own thoughts and the mental health of those around you. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of any assistance.

I often describe our organisation as being primarily concerned with the practice of support and care, delivered within a culture of quality, mutual support and learning. It is a description of what we are good at and how we do it. I believe this holds us in good stead for the challenges we are facing, working together and looking after each other.

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IHCS can be contacted on the one phone number at all times: 6228 3899

This is the only number that diverts to our afterhours on-call phone. Please do not call any other number

Environmental Alerts

In the event of a bushfire

Contact IHCS office prior to attending a schedule visit in an active bushfire area as *Advice level notifications* will be monitored for areas under threat, also contact us if you have any concerns.

- Advise us of scheduled client visits within the affected areas
- Advise if you are under threat or know of any clients who may potentially be at risk

Do not attend an area where there is no mobile coverage unless a landline is available

Listen to ABC local radio stations for bushfire information and updates

Southern Tasmania: ABC Radio Hobart 936AM

Northern Tasmania: ABC Northern Tasmania 91.7FM

Tasmanian bushfires and road closure alerts can be viewed on the TFS website: www.fire.tas.gov.au

In the event of floods or snow

Contact IHCS office prior to attending any flood or snowbound affected area, or if you have any concerns.

- Advise us of scheduled client visits within the affected areas
- Advise office if you are under threat or know of any clients who may potentially be at risk

Road closures and weather alerts can be viewed on: www.bom.gov.au/tas

For the attention of all IHCS staff

IHCS recognises that while everyone is at risk in an emergency i.e. bushfire or flood and unable to evacuate themselves, some people may be at increased risk because they are experiencing factors that compromise their safety and security, health and well being, knowledge and/or social connection.

Should you be aware of any clients whom you consider to be at risk please contact John at IHCS office.

Thank you

IHCS Training Rooms

Due to social-isolation our RTO access is closed to students until further notice. Anne, Cathi and Lynne are still available to contact via phone on 6272 3696

Training dates 2020 to be advised

We are currently transitioning to becoming available for on-line training



Independent Health Care Service

NURSING ♦ PERSONAL CARE ♦ HOME HELP ♦ HANDYMAN

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23 March, 2020

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to you in regards to the Coronavirus, COVID-19 and what you can expect from Independent Health Care Service (IHCS), along with matters for you to consider going forward.

Above all else we will work towards not introducing any virus into your home. When we visit:

1. Please expect that we will not send any employee that is currently unwell.
2. All employees will closely practice standard precautions, starting with washing their hands as their first duty upon entering your home. This may seem an unusual practice if you are not already used to it, however it is an extremely effective way of stopping transmission.

From there on, standard practice requires frequent handwashing and surface cleaning appropriate for the duties undertaken. Please see overleaf for a few protective tips. We have also made our Infection Control policy available on our website: www.independenthealth.com.au

In addition, we have dedicated a coronavirus section on our website in which we will place as much information as we can. You can look here to see the information we are providing to our personnel as well as advice and resources we are receiving from others.

Last week we suspended the need for you to sign timesheets. We highly value your endorsement and our personnel will still show you their progressive timesheet entries, but we are not asking you to risk touching them at the moment.

In terms of your service please consider how it might be changed, or limited, to those that are essential and which conform to social distancing within the community. For example, if we currently support you to go shopping, stay home and let our people do it for you. Social support and community access may need to change, be reduced or suspended. You may also need additional support, such as for in-home respite. I also ask that if you become unwell, for whatever reason, please let us know at your earliest opportunity. We need to respond quickly to your care at this time.

I anticipate a high level of employee leave but we will try and keep the same people coming to your homes. Our offices will also be effectively shut to all non-essential meetings and visitors. Please phone or email us, there is still the post and we can come and see you when needed.

Finally, on behalf of all at IHCS, I would like to thank you and assure you we will do our best. We understand our responsibilities and recognise the trust you place in us. Our service is very experienced, highly qualified and we are good at what we do. With you, working together, I am sure we will see the best in ourselves as we rise to the challenges ahead.

Yours faithfully

Matthew Vickers
Executive Director

'DO THE RIGHT THING'



www.independenthealth.com.au

ph. 62283899



Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly, using soap and water for at least 15 seconds. Use alcohol-based hand sanitiser if soap and water aren't available.

Always Wash Your Hands



When you come in.



Before and after touching others.



For safe food handling.



After touching potentially contaminated objects.



Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.



Cough or sneeze into a tissue or flexed elbow, then throw the tissue in the trash.



Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that people frequently touch.



Only wear a face mask if you have respiratory symptoms or are caring for someone with respiratory symptoms.