



9 April, 2020

## **Hospital EDs are open for business despite COVID-19**

As we enter the Easter holiday, district health boards have issued a reminder that hospital Emergency Departments remain open to provide care to patients despite the COVID-19 lockdown.

Over recent weeks, patient volumes have fallen by up to 50% at some EDs, often resulting in worsened health condition by the time people do seek help.

“We are concerned people may not be coming in for the care when they need it,” said Dr Dale Bramley, Waitemata DHB CEO and Northern Region COVID-19 response lead. “Our message is that it’s OK to come to our EDs if you have a real health emergency.

“We are here to provide emergency care for everyone in need with our EDs remaining open throughout the lockdown period.”

Dr Bramley said people should seek the level of care that is appropriate for their needs. For relatively minor ailments, your local GP is the best place to seek care. Many are offering phone and video consultations during the lockdown.

Over Easter, people can also contact their local urgent care clinic or call Healthline for advice.

“For emergencies, people shouldn’t hesitate to call 111 or present at any of our emergency departments. Our teams are there to provide care and that doesn’t change because we are in the lockdown period.

“This message is particularly important for our older people, who often don’t like to make a fuss. The sooner we are able to intervene, the better your health outcome will usually be.”

Dr Bramley said New Zealand hospitals followed international best practice for infection prevention and people could be confident that if they did need to come to their local emergency department that their safety would be prioritised.

“We are triaging people on arrival in order to keep people who are under suspicion for COVID away from other patients and we are using all appropriate personal protective equipment.

“Don’t delay reaching out for emergency help due to fear of being infected with COVID.”

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**Media contact:**

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