

Thursday 30 December 2021

## **CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)** **Update #62**

### **Heat and working in PPE and vaccine dose interval changes again**

**Victorian COVID-19 cases on 30 December 2021:** there are 23,833,801 active cases, including 5137 new locally acquired cases. There are 395 patients in hospital (the 7-day average is 378), including 123 in ICU (55 active), ICU (45 cleared) with 23 on ventilators. Another 13 people have died. There have been 170,695 cases and 1518 deaths since the start of the pandemic. Data links are at the end of this newsflash.

### **Heat and working in PPE - testing site temporary closures expected**

Rising temperatures will present challenges for members working in PPE, particularly those in mobile and fixed testing locations which are often outdoors.

The Victorian Department of Health is advising the community that some testing sites may temporarily close over the next few days to protect staff from extreme heat. See @VicGovDH tweets via <https://bit.ly/3HmgD21>

The department is asking the community to check testing sites are open before joining the queue via <https://bit.ly/2TB9eZ9>

ANMF members are reminded that your employers have obligations to provide a safe workplace and should follow the Victorian Department of Health's guidance titled '*Controlling heat stress in health and human services (COVID-19): guidance for employers and their staff*' via <https://bit.ly/3EFqwGr>

The department's guidance requires employers and workers on steps to take to reduce the risks associated with working in heat.

Importantly, this guidance is **not** limited to only COVID-19 testing sites and is equally applicable to other members who may be exposed to the conditions, including hospital in the home. It assists employers to undertake risk assessments, in advance of the conditions occurring (e.g. based on predicted conditions in the coming days) and provides advice around controls that may be implemented to reduce the risks, including potentially postponing non-urgent work outdoors.

Authorised by Lisa Fitzpatrick ANMF (Vic Branch) Secretary

The guidance should be read in conjunction with:

1. the ANMF (Vic Branch) policy 'Guidelines for working in heat' via <https://bit.ly/2LMFYel>
2. WorkSafe Victoria's 'Working in heat' guidance via <http://bit.ly/2XXmKVK>
3. Worksafe Victoria's 'Prevention and protection from heat illness' guidance, which provides clear explanation of the employer obligations to prevent issues related to heat, via <http://bit.ly/2M40XsQ>

To be clear, employers have an obligation to provide a workplace that is safe and without risk to health, so far as is practicable, and this includes in relation to heat. Employers are required to implement controls to either eliminate, or reduce the risk so far as is reasonably practicable.

ANMF encourages all members working in areas subject to the outdoor conditions to take the following steps:

1. Request the heat management plan from your employer, so that you are able to review it and check whether there are clear, proactive risk assessments being undertaken by your employer.
2. Report using VHIMS/RiskMan/incident reporting systems where inadequate controls have been identified to be put in place, in advance of days of significant heat.
3. When there is a predicted day over 30 degrees (the next three days) or extended sun exposure or humidity (as noted in the department's guidance), report using VHIMS/RiskMan/ incident reporting systems if no/inadequate controls have been implemented by your employer.
4. Raise the issue with your HSR in the event you have one. Remember HSRs have the power to issue Provisional Improvement Notices requiring the employer to implement controls, where there is no/an inadequate heat policy in place, which clearly identifies controls to be implemented, and the triggers for these controls.

ANMF strongly recommends that members working in sites with **no** duly elected HSR, consult their designated working group (usually geographical but check with your HR department) and elect a HSR. In areas where we have HSRs we see better OHS outcomes.

5. Where there is a serious and immediate risk to health and safety due to heat, raise this with your HSR and manager. HSRs are able to issue cease works, where there is an imminent risk to health and safety, and inadequate controls in place, if management refuse or fail to implement appropriate controls.
6. Contact the ANMF via our Member Assistance inquiry form via <https://anmfvic.asn.au/memberassistance> so that we can assist.
7. Remember, anyone has the right to contact WorkSafe Victoria to report issues around health and safety in workplaces – this can be done via the Advisory Service on 1800 136 089 or via [advisory\\_service@worksafe.vic.gov.au](mailto:advisory_service@worksafe.vic.gov.au)

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## **ATAGI reduces interval between second and third COVID-19 vaccine dose**

From 4 January 2022, the interval between the second and third COVID-19 vaccine dose will reduce from five to four months.

The interval will change again on 31 January 2022 to three months.

Federal Health Minister Greg Hunt announced the changes on 24 December 2021 in response to new advice from the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI).

### **More information**

ATAGI statement on the Omicron variant and the timing of COVID-19 booster vaccination <https://bit.ly/3sKLVvo>  
Federal Health Minister Greg Hunt media conference <https://bit.ly/3pDeoRX>

### **Book your third dose**

Federal Government 'find a clinic' (chemists and medical clinics) <https://bit.ly/3Eiz7yp>  
Victorian Government hubs and pop ups <https://bit.ly/3dZjuC6>

## **Important COVID-19 links for nurses, midwives and personal care workers**

ANMF continues to collate the important links all in one place, so you don't have to go looking. Please bookmark and check this page regularly – <https://anmfvic.asn.au/COVID-19>

### **Latest COVID-19 statistics**

Victorian COVID-19 data dashboard <https://bit.ly/3j5vJwC>  
Victorian Chief Health Officer daily update <https://bit.ly/34Et8Ug>  
Victorian Chief Health Officer daily media release <https://bit.ly/2EDiQLb>  
Victorian Government's vaccination data dashboard <https://bit.ly/319HzPq>

Federal Government national COVID-19 data <https://bit.ly/3spz67F>  
Federal Government's national and aged care vaccination data <https://bit.ly/3spRSM5>

### **Don't bring it home: guide to minimise the risk of infection**

A reminder that ANMF (Vic Branch) has developed a guide to assist you in relation to returning home from work after a shift.

Job Reps and HSRs are encouraged to print the poster which is part of this PDF newsflash. You can also download the 'Protocols for entering your home and minimising the risk of infection' A4 poster via <bit.ly/COVID19-DBIH>

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## Protocols for entering your home and minimising the risk of infection.

-  **1** On entry, remove your shoes and place in a plastic box.
-  **2** Leave your bag, wallet, mobile, keys, etc in a box near the entry.
-  **3** Change out of your clothes immediately and wash them. Use the hottest possible machine wash setting and dryer if you can.
-  **4** Have a shower.
-  **5** Clean items you've brought in and surfaces you've touched.

**Remember to wash your hands regularly.**

### Cleaning tips

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- Hot soapy wash, wipe or disinfectant spray (depending on surface) phone cases, keys, ID, lanyard, glasses, etc.**

**Consider changing in and out of your uniform/scrubs at work.**