

BCH statement 24/03/20

As a part of the local health system Ballarat Community Health remains open and committed to providing the best care and support for our clients and staff. We are developing new models of care to support most people to stay in their homes and access our GPs and other health professionals via telephone-based or online appointments to minimise the risk of COVID-19 exposure. **The very best first step in accessing our service is to call (03) 5338 4500 so we can provide you with information specific to your situation and book you an appropriate appointment.**

Service changes have occurred in line with advice from the Victorian chief health officer and will be continually reviewed with changes made based on official advice. Due to the rapidly changing situation we will continue to update you on our responses to COVID-19. You can find that information at www.bchc.org.au/coronavirus.

Minimising risk

If you are a client, and believe you have symptoms of COVID-19, please do not come into our centres but rather call reception on (03) 5338 4500. Any clients who have symptoms will be isolated and screened to determine if they are at risk, as it is vital that we prioritise the health and safety of our staff and clients and those in our wider community.

We continue to encourage the use of good hygiene practises, including washing hands for 20 seconds with soap, as well as maintaining physical distancing strategies. These are in practise across all our sites.

Ballarat Community Health is open

It remains our priority to continue offering health services to our clients and we have the opportunity to work with our participants to trial innovative ways to deliver services. There has been some positive feedback about the convenience of phone appointments and the ease of using online tools such as zoom.

Our needle syringe services continue to operate as normal.

Group programs

All face-to-face group activities and events are suspended.

Referrals

We remain committed to continuing to provide services where possible, with an emphasis on non-face-to-face interventions where possible. We will endeavour to remain open for referrals wherever we can.

Outreach

We will continue to support the clients that we outreach to or provide with care coordination or case management services. However, unless essential, all support will be provided remotely (that is, non-face-to-face).

Optimism and resilience

BCH will continue to provide the community with strategies and innovative ways to maintain our shared health and wellbeing during this time of disruption. Check out our [website](#) and [Facebook page](#) for more information. If you have questions, call your Ballarat Community Health worker on (03) 5338 4500.