

Media Release

The Hon Jenny Mikakos MLA

Minister for the Coordination of Health and Human Services – COVID-19

Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Minister for Health

Minister for Ambulance Services



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TREATING MORE PEOPLE AT HOME TO SAVE LIVES

Thousands of Victorian families are seeing their doctor from the comfort of their home as part of a telehealth boom at The Royal Children's Hospital, as coronavirus changes the way we access healthcare.

Minister for Health Jenny Mikakos said almost 70 per cent of specialist clinic appointments at the hospital were being delivered by telehealth technology – greatly reducing the risk for patients, families and staff during the coronavirus pandemic.

Recognising the need to provide care to Victorians self-isolating during the pandemic, The Royal Children's Hospital quickly converted 50 per cent of its clinical consultations to over the phone or online using telehealth. That increased to nearly 70 percent in just a few short weeks.

The hospital operates one of the busiest outpatient services in Victoria with an average of 1,200 presentations for face-to-face appointments every weekday. The switch to remote consultations has seen that number drop to 250 presentations a day.

Before the coronavirus pandemic, telehealth was widely used in regional and rural Victoria to help people living in remote locations get the care they needed without driving long distances.

It's now become a vital tool in the hospital's coronavirus response – protecting doctors and their patients from being exposed to the virus and removing long wait times to see a doctor in person.

In April 2019 there were a total of 231 telehealth consultations and in April 2020 more than 11,200 appointments were conducted using this technology.

The Royal Children's Hospital is delivering a range of resources to support clinicians and families and maintain the highest standards. Every patient is assessed by a clinician before deciding if telehealth is appropriate.

The hospital has expanded its IT system to cope with the increased demand and is using split screen technology to allow patients to view their scans during consultations.

The Victorian Government is undertaking a testing blitz to better understand how the virus is spreading in the community and provide more options when it comes to potentially lifting restrictions. Anyone with even the mildest of symptoms – such as a runny nose or scratchy throat – is encouraged to get tested.

For the latest information and advice on coronavirus and testing site locations, visit dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Jenny Mikakos

"Telehealth is an extremely important tool in the fight against coronavirus – allowing patients to receive the very best care in the comfort of their home, while keeping doctors and other staff safe."

"I thank doctors, nurses and other staff who have adapted so quickly to keep caring for Victorians while keeping themselves and our community safe."

Quote attributable to The Royal Children's Hospital Chief Operating Officer Jane Miller

"Increasing our telehealth service to almost 70 per cent has allowed us to continue to provide great care to our patients during this pandemic, and helped us slow the spread of coronavirus, keeping our patients and staff safe."

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