

# Media Release

**The Hon Jenny Mikakos MLC**

Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

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

Minister for Health

Minister for Ambulance Services



Wednesday, 10 June 2020

## **DON'T NEGLECT YOUR HEALTH DURING THE PANDEMIC**

Victorians are being urged to keep their health in check during the coronavirus pandemic by continuing to seek medical treatment and general healthcare checks.

Minister for Health Jenny Mikakos today visited Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, which reported a fall in referrals of up to 40 per cent at the start of the pandemic, as potentially unwell people delay visiting their doctor or going to hospital.

Putting off a visit to the doctor or hospital if you experience any lumps or unusual symptoms or delaying age-appropriate tests that could indicate cancer, could lead to more severe illness and added strain on hospitals' critical and intensive care resources.

Victoria's world-class hospital system is well prepared to deal with any further spikes in coronavirus cases alongside its everyday operations, with strict infection control processes in place to manage additional risk.

GP clinics are also undertaking additional cleaning and are well trained in the use of personal protective equipment – to ensure they can provide a safe environment for patients throughout the pandemic.

If Victorians have a pre-existing medical condition that requires regular treatment from a health professional, it is vital that they continue with their usual management plan – including taking any normal medicines – to protect their health and avoid hospitalisation.

Many hospitals and GPs are offering telehealth appointments for both check-ups and ongoing conditions, to prevent the spread of infection and ensure more vulnerable groups have access to healthcare when they need it.

Peter Mac has gone from seeing less than 5 per cent of their patients via telehealth to around 60 per cent during the peak of the pandemic – providing 1800 telehealth appointments from 15 March to 15 April.

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 across the state – protecting doctors and their patients from the virus and removing wait times to see a doctor in person.

Cancer screening programs are continuing to operate throughout Victoria, also with strict infection control measures in place to make sure staff and patients are safe. If you are due for breast, bowel, prostate or cervical cancer screening, don't put your health at risk – make an appointment now.

If you are concerned about any aspect of your health, it's important to visit a GP – and in an emergency, don't hesitate to call 000 for urgent assistance.

### **Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Jenny Mikakos**

*"Whether it's a regular screening appointment or you have a concerning symptom, coronavirus shouldn't put you off seeking treatment for any health concerns."*

*"Our hospitals and GP clinics are open and ready to help all patients, with the strictest infection control guidelines to keep everyone safe."*

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

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