

Media Release

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Premier



Thursday, 25 August 2022

FREE GP RESPIRATORY CLINICS JUST FOR KIDS

The Andrews Labor Government is providing more free primary care options for children and families while easing pressure on our hospital system – with GP respiratory clinics designed specifically for kids set to open in coming weeks.

Premier Daniel Andrews and Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas today announced the first clinic – run by cohealth and located just a few minutes' walk from the Royal Children's Hospital – will start taking patients from Monday. A second paediatric clinic at the Monash Children's Hospital will open next month.

While children can continue to be seen at any of Victoria's GP respiratory clinics, these two new paediatric-focused clinics will allow kids with low to moderate symptoms to receive free and immediate treatment for a range of respiratory conditions in a more child-friendly environment.

To reduce demand on the hospital system, the two paediatric clinics will see up to 150 patients per week combined, preventing avoidable visits to the emergency department.

The clinics will be free, with or without a Medicare card. They will be open seven days a week, with weekday opening hours running from approximately 6pm to 11pm and weekend hours to be confirmed by next week.

Telehealth options will be available for COVID positive patients or those unable to travel to a clinic, and children are still able to be seen at existing respiratory clinics – many of which are open seven days a week with extended operating hours.

The clinics will be staffed by qualified clinicians, including GPs and nurses, who are highly experienced in working with children and providing immediate support to their patients.

These two paediatric clinics are building on the success of the 52 existing GP respiratory clinics across the state, including 37 in metropolitan Melbourne and 15 in regional Victoria.

This winter has put unprecedented demand on the health system, with thousands more cases of COVID-19, the flu and other respiratory illnesses than 2020 and 2021.

Even with the bulk of the winter weather behind us, hospital emergency departments are still seeing a high number of respiratory illnesses among children, which can be expected to continue as we enter spring when cases of hay fever will be on the rise and the risk of thunderstorm asthma increases.

Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

"Kids with respiratory illnesses are presenting to emergency departments in record numbers, and with spring just around the corner, we know demand for these services will continue."

"These clinics are part of our plan to ease pressure on Victoria's health system and ensure that all Victorians can access the care they need, sooner, and closer to home."

Quote attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

"Rolling out this free service in a specialised environment designed with kids in mind gives families more options for high-quality care when they can't see their regular GP and a visit to hospital isn't needed."

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