

The World Health Organisation has classified COVID-19 as a pandemic, and as a result the ACT has declared a Public Health Emergency. This means that many businesses and workplaces are closed, and people are required to stay home except for essential things (like buying food or medicine). AGA has prepared this information document to provide our members and community with an overview of key pieces of information that are important for our trans, gender diverse and intersex community and allies to know.

## Looking after yourself and others

Some of the simplest ways to protect yourself and the people around you are to:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially before and after eating.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with your elbow or a tissue (remember to place tissues in the rubbish)
- Clean and disinfect surfaces
- Outside of your house avoid touching things, and stay more than 1.5m away from other people.

It can take anywhere from 2 to 14 days to show symptoms from when you might be first exposed to the virus, so if you've been in contact with someone who has been confirmed to have the virus you should self-isolate for 14 days.

People who have underlying illnesses and a vulnerability to respiratory illness, older people, and people with suppressed immune systems are at higher risk, and you should take extra precaution if you are in one of these groups. AGA recommends you continue to monitor public health advice (page 3).

## Looking after your mental health

It is normal to feel a wide range of reactions and emotions in this incredibly challenging time. Taking care of yourself and maintaining good general health can help you manage stress or anxiety you might be feeling. Try to stick to a regular sleep schedule, eat and drink water regularly, connect with your loved ones online or on the phone, and tap into your local community through AGA or through other online groups.

For those looking to access mental health services during this period most psychologists and counsellors in the ACT are now offering online or phone appointments. Patients will be bulk billed under new regulations in place from now until September 30th so that any member of the community can access these services at no cost provided they have a mental health care plan.

You can get a mental health care plan from your GP. If you would like help finding a GP, psychologist or counsellor, please get in contact with our peer navigation service:

**fridaycentre@genderrights.org.au**  
**0403 085 772.**

## **In a mental health or domestic crisis please reach out to one of these services for support:**

- QLife, open daily from 3pm to midnight: 1800 184 527 or <https://qlife.org.au/>
- Lifeline, open 24/7: 13 11 14 or <https://www.lifeline.org.au/>
- Domestic Violence Crisis Service, open 24/7: (02) 6280 0900 <https://dvcs.org.au/>
- Crisis and Assessment Treatment Team (CATT), open 24/7: (02) 6205 1065

## **For those aged under 25, there are also the following services available:**

- Kids Helpline, for ages 5-25, open 24/7: 1800 55 1800 or <https://kidshelpline.com.au/>
- eheadspace: 1800 650 890 or <https://www.eheadspace.org.au/>

## **Intersex Specific Info**

Our intersex project office Cody is working from home and will be organising an online version of our intersex support group Side by Side. For more info get in contact with Cody at [cody.smith@genderrights.org.au](mailto:cody.smith@genderrights.org.au).

Intersex Human Rights Australia and Intersex Peer Support Australia are also holding regular weekly catch-ups. For more details check out <https://ihra.org.au/36324/find-community-keep-social-online/>

## **Hormones**

If you are currently using gender affirming hormones, you can make sure you've got access to at least 14 days supply. The forms of hormones or puberty blockers listed below have at least a 6-12 month supply in Australia so there is no need to fear that these will become unavailable (thanks to the Equinox Clinic in Melbourne for compiling this list)

PRIMOTESTON - Bayer; REANDRON - Bayer; TESTOGEL - Besins Healthcare Australia Pty Ltd; ANDRO FORTE - Lawley Pharmaceutical; PROGYNOVA - Bayer; PROVERA - Pfizer Australia Pty Ltd; ESTRADOT - NOVARTIS Pharmaceuticals Australia Pty Limited; ZUMENON - Mylan Health Pty Ltd; ESTALIS - NOVARTIS Pharmaceuticals Australia Pty Limited; PROMETRIUM - Besins Healthcare Australia Pty Ltd; ANDROCUR - Bayer; CYPROTERONE - Sandoz Pty Ltd; SPIROLACTONE / SPIRACTIN - Alphapharm Pty Limited; GOERELIN (Zoladex); TRIPTORELIN/DECAPEPTYL; LEUPRORELIN (Lupron, Lucrin)

## **Trans Specific Info**

We understand that access to transition related medication and services may be a concern for some at this time. Here are a few suggestions and some information to help you stay on top of things if you or a loved one is trans or gender diverse.

- Ensure you have any other transition related items on hand that may be important to your health and wellbeing (eg. Razors, binders, wigs, packers, etc...)
- Make sure you have up to date prescriptions for all medications (if not you can ask your GP about options for mailing new scripts).
- Keep any documents that display your correct name and gender in a place that is easy to access.
- If you do not currently have identification that matches your documents you could request a letter from your GP stating these.
- If you need to go to hospital or see a different doctor than your regular one, consider using this template from ACON (<https://www.acon.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/tgd-download.png>) as a way to communicate your information.

**Contact AGA at [support@genderrights.org.au](mailto:support@genderrights.org.au)**

## Surgery & Fertility

It is currently unclear exactly what impact this might have on gender affirming medical procedures. Some hospitals are putting elective surgeries on hold in order to free up capacity to respond to the pandemic, and many forms of gender affirming surgery are considered elective. If you have a date booked for surgery in the near future in the first instance contact your surgeon for advice.

Many IVF and fertility related procedures have also been postponed indefinitely, which might affect people trying to conceive or those who are wanting to preserve their fertility. If your surgery or treatment is put on an indefinite hold, or if you were planning for something that now might not happen on your timeline, it's okay to feel distressed and seek out support. If you're in this situation, please reach out to AGA, lean on your support systems and seek support for the mental health services we've noted above.

## Binding

There is no evidence that binding places you at a higher risk of infection, however it is possible that binding may accelerate the symptoms and severity if you do get infected (reference: <https://gcn.ie/guidelines-chest-binding-covid-19/>).

If you are feeling unwell, or have any symptoms the safest thing to do is to avoid binding. This can be difficult for some, but trying to wear baggy clothes such as a big hoodie and staying in (which you should be doing anyway!) can help with discomfort.

**Look out for yourself and your loved ones! If you experience any discrimination from services during this time please contact AGA or the ACT Human Rights Commission on (02) 6205 2222**

## Where to get help

The Canberra Relief Network has been set up by the ACT Government in response to the current situation and can provide you with food and other non-perishable items if you are struggling to afford or access these. <https://canberrarelief.com.au/>

In addition to this there are numerous 'Mutual Aid' groups being set up around Canberra. If you would like to join a local group for support or to volunteer, check out <https://canberramutualaid.wordpress.com/> or the Canberra Region Corona Virus Mutual Aid Group on Facebook.

## What to do if you think you are sick or have come in to contact with a confirmed case

The symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, sore throat or shortness of breath. If you have symptoms, here is what you should do:

- Stay at home and self-isolate, including separating from other people and pets in your home if possible
- Wear a facemask if you are around other people, and practice social distancing and good hygiene.
- Seek medical care but always call ahead before visiting a GP or other medical clinic to tell them that you may have the virus. They will have a plan in place or direct you to where to get help so that you can access care without putting others at risk.
- *If you have serious symptoms, such as difficulty breathing, chest pain or severe fever, call triple zero (000).*

## Important Resources

ACT Health has established a dedicated information site that contains the latest local updates. You can access it here: <https://www.covid19.act.gov.au>

The Australian Government is operating a 24/7 health information line which you can access by calling 1800 020 080

**Contact AGA at [support@genderrights.org.au](mailto:support@genderrights.org.au)**