

## COVID-19 TALKKIT

A communique for all people living with HIV in NSW

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### FEEDBACK & COMMENTS

[contact@positivelife.org.au](mailto:contact@positivelife.org.au)

## Friday 16 July 2021

The latest announcement from the NSW Government on Wednesday 14 July, confirmed that we're all in for another two weeks of lockdown until at least midnight on Friday 30 July.

Once again we're aware that while some of us are coping well, not everyone is travelling as well as we expected or hoped. Some of our community are a little surprised to find things seem a bit more difficult this time around.

If you find that things are a little tougher than usual, please check in with someone sooner rather than leaving it. It's so important to take care of your mental health and wellbeing during these times.

You can call us here at the office on 9206 2177 or get free telephone support from Lifeline on 13 11 44 or Beyond Blue on 1800 512 358 at any time.

If you experience domestic violence or feel at risk in your domestic relationships call 1800 737 732 (RESPECT), MensLine Australia on 1300 789 978 or the NSW Domestic Violence helpline on 1800 656 463 at any time. If you prefer to get free LGBTI peer support and referral you can call QLife on 1800 184 527 from 3pm to midnight every day. If you or somebody you know is in IMMEDIATE danger please call 000.

At this time of lockdown, it's important to stay in touch with friends, family and carers by phone or other electronic means. Stay connected, keep well and safe.

– Positive Life NSW



## LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

The Australian Government has provided extra Medicare subsidised support for people who experience mental health impacts due to COVID19 lockdowns or the coronavirus pandemic from 9 October 2020 until 30 June 2022.

Getting support when you need it is a sign of strength and a strategy to stay as healthy as possible. During this pandemic and especially during lockdown, it's normal to feel anxious, overwhelmed, confused, sad or even bored. Feelings like these can take their toll, and we all need to take the time to care for ourselves and to look out for our friends, family and colleagues.

Talk to your GP about accessing a Medicare subsidised psychological counselling session. Your GP will need to draw up a mental health treatment plan with you, and you'll be able to access an initial 10 individual Better Access sessions in a calendar year. If you use those up, your GP can write you a referral for additional 10 sessions.

**MORE:** [Looking after your mental health during coronavirus \(COVID-19\) restrictions.](#)

## FACE MASK RULES

For the first time in NSW, wearing a face mask is mandatory in some settings.

### Where and When

- On all public transport
- While waiting for public transport at a bus or light rail stop, train station or ferry wharf
- In all residential building common areas
- In all non-residential indoor areas such as shopping centres, shops, banks, workplaces etc

NSW Health strongly recommends you wear a mask outdoors if you are unable to physically distance from people you *do not* live with.

### When you can remove the mask

- You do not need to wear a mask inside your own apartment
- When you need to communicate with someone who is deaf or hard of hearing and seeing the mouth is essential
- When you are eating or drinking
- When you're working along in an office
- When you're in a vehicle alone or with another person from your household.

### Exemptions

You are not required to wear a mask if you have a physical or mental health illness, condition or disability, that makes wearing a mask unsuitable. For example, if you have a skin condition, an intellectual disability, autism or trauma, you are not required to wear a mask.

Please be respectful to people who are not wearing a mask as the reasons for not wearing a mask are not always visible or obvious.

**MORE:** [www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/rules/face-mask-rules](http://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/rules/face-mask-rules)

With new vaccine developments every day, it's normal to have questions or concerns, and possibly feel a little hesitant about getting a vaccine. When you're looking for more information to answer your questions or allay any concerns you might have, check out this NSW Health webpage to help you make an informed decision – [IS IT TRUE?](#)



## COPING IN THESE TIMES

**BE INFORMED.** One way to manage your reactions is listen to credible news about the virus from trusted sources such as the Australian Government Department of Health website, the NSW Health website, and the World Health Organisation website. Websites registered by government or educational institutions on domain names ending in .gov.au or .edu.au and peer-reviewed articles or books written by researchers for students and researchers are good sources as well. Sources from out-of-date materials, social media networks, blogs, research articles without citations or websites that end in .com or .net etc may not be reliable.

**KNOW YOUR HISTORY.** Over the past 50 years, there have been multiple pandemics, virus or conditions that have raised national and international fears. These include tuberculosis, SARS, Ebola, HIV, hepatitis, measles, to name a few. Normally these fears follow a cycle of scepticism, followed by attention, followed by panic, followed by reality, followed by a return to normality. Remind yourself of these patterns to help understand the course and plan for the future.

**SHUT DOWN THE NOISE.** When we get stressed our thoughts can become dark, brooding, and pessimistic. These thoughts are often triggered by stress, and not always true or helpful. Switch off the 'noise' of social media, news, or even radio for most of each day. Excuse yourself from people who are creating stress. Keep checking in to

reliable news sources only once or twice a day, but otherwise, turn down the 'noise'. Instead, replace it with things that can help you, including doing the things you enjoy, listening to music, entertainment, games, or even meditation.

**KEEP UP YOUR ROUTINES.** We all have routines in our daily lives. For example, we tend to get up at a certain time, brush our teeth in a certain way, get ready for the day's activities, and follow many other routines until we go to sleep at night. Your emotional health is strongly affected by regular routines, which not only help to get us organised, but give us a sense of achievement and accomplishment. Some of our routines involve other people, who also benefit from them, for example, family mealtimes or get-togethers with friends. Think about the routines that are important to you and those around you, and find clever and safe ways to keep up these routines or create new ones.

**KEEP LOOKING FORWARD.** There's a helpful saying, 'this too shall pass'. Keep in mind that eventually, things will return to normal or a 'new normal'. It's important to have confidence that things will improve and that our world, our society and community will recover. It can help to write down your long-term goals, and think about things that you will do each day and week, which you can and will enjoy. Consider how you might be able to bring other people into your plans, as they might also benefit from thinking about the future.

FROM: [Maintaining good mental health, Department of Health website.](#)





## PAYING THE BILLS THIS WINTER

If you're having trouble covering your electricity bills this winter while you're on a fixed income, you have a number of options.

1. **Always speak with your electricity or gas provider first** if you're struggling. Ask about what hardship support they can offer you. They have staff trained to assist.
2. **Ask to go on a payment plan**, to pay your bill over a longer time or make small regular payments. Stay on the plan to protect yourself from disconnection, interest payments and late fees.
3. **If you receive Centrelink payments**, the [Centrepay service](#) is available to make regular payments towards your energy bills. Centrepay can help manage your finances by spreading out the costs of seasonal changes to your energy use.
4. **Ask your current energy provider if they can offer you a better deal.** If they can't give you more help you can switch providers to save. Check out this free comparator sites on this [Find the best energy deal](#) page.
5. **If you're having difficulty paying your current household energy bill**

because of a short- term financial crisis or emergency, such as unexpected medical bills, or reduced income due to COVID-19, you could be eligible for [Energy Accounts Payment Assistance \(EAPA\)](#) \$50 vouchers.

6. Ask your provider **if you're on all the concessions you may be entitled to.** You can check for all of the government [rebates and assistance](#) in your state or territory. There is usually a number of government concessions or rebates to help you out.
7. **The Water Payment Assistance Scheme (PAS)** can help you if you are having difficulty [paying your Hunter Water, Sydney Water or Shoalhaven Water bill](#). This scheme can help if you're experiencing financial hardship by providing credit to your water account.
8. The NSW Government funds a number of **rebate programs for electricity and gas customers**, including: NSW Family Energy Rebate, Low Income Household Rebate, NSW Gas Rebate, Life Support Rebate, Medical Energy Rebate, and Seniors Energy Rebate. Visit the [Service NSW Concession, rebates and assistance page](#) for more details.
9. If you're a pensioner currently receiving support through Centrelink, you may be eligible for extra help with bills and medicine costs **through the Pension Supplement.** This supplement is a combined payment of Pharmaceutical Allowance, Utilities Allowance, GST Supplement and Telephone Allowance. [Visit Service NSW for more information.](#)



## COVID VACCINE CLINICS

There are two COVID-19 vaccines currently available in Australia: *Pfizer* and *AstraZeneca*. All COVID-19 vaccines are free for everyone in Australia regardless of Medicare or visa status.

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) recommends the COVID19 Pfizer vaccine as the preferred vaccine for those aged 16-59 years of age. In outbreak areas, ATAGI now advises people under 60 years to consider having the AstraZeneca shot now, if the Pfizer vaccine is not available.

### POSITIVE LIFE AGED CARE SUPPORT

Living with HIV in NSW, over 45 years and want a hand to make life a little easier? Call (02) 9206-2177 or 1800 245 677 (freecall) or email [contact@positivelife.org.au](mailto:contact@positivelife.org.au)



## ARE YOU ELIGIBLE?

Use the [COVID-19 vaccine eligibility checker](#) to find out when and where you can receive a COVID-19 vaccine, including your second dose.

**NSW residents over 40** have wider access to the AstraZeneca vaccine at all NSW Health sites and will soon be able to access the vaccine at green-lit pharmacies across the state. **NSW residents aged 18 to 39** are also able to get the AstraZeneca vaccine in consultation with their GP.

When booking your vaccination, you can ask to book a longer appointment, or an appointment later in the day. You can also ask for somewhere quiet to sit away from distraction, or for support if you are afraid of needles, or you can also ask a friend or relative to go with you if you wish.

# COVID-19 VACCINATION

## No equipment? No worries!



### Mail order NSP available NOW

If you're self isolated or quarantined and need injecting equipment, don't put yourself at risk by reusing or sharing equipment. Instead, contact NUAA — we will mail you out however much you need of all sorts of injecting equipment (including speciality gear like wheel filters). Visit our website for more info about how COVID-19 might affect you as a person who uses drugs.

Ph: (02) 8354 7300 or freecall 1800 644 413 | visit [nuaa.org.au](http://nuaa.org.au)





## FREE 14 DAY CREATIVE COURSE

**THE AMAZING FACE:** The National Portrait Gallery is offering a [free 14-module online dive into portraiture](#).

Learn how portraiture works through text, video and audio, alongside activities to boost your learning.



### THE AMAZING FACE →

This free introduction to portraiture features 14 modules designed to banish boredom, manifest mindfulness, and conjure creativity!

#### POSITIVE LIFE TREATMENTS SUPPORT

For all your HIV treatment questions and support, including COVID-19 concerns, call (02) 9206-2177, 1800 245 677 (freecall outside metro) Mon-Thurs 9am to 5pm or email [contact@positivelife.org.au](mailto:contact@positivelife.org.au)



Want to talk about your HIV and health?

Contact a Positive Life Treatments Officer  
02 9206 2177 or 1800 245 677 (freecall)

Positive Life NSW

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We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land that we live and work on, and recognise, respect and value the deep and continuing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to land, community and culture. We pay our respects to Elders, Past and Present.

Positive Life NSW

The voice of all people living with HIV