

COVID-19 UPDATE

A message from the CEO

The COVID-19 virus is presenting significant challenges to practitioners and businesses and circumstances are changing quickly. Over the weekend further social distancing measures were introduced and we know a lot of practitioners are concerned as to whether they should continue to practice.

Current information is that a list of businesses including pubs, clubs, gyms and restaurants must close. Other businesses, including hairdressers and beauticians, can continue to operate but should do so in a way that permits social distancing. This may be difficult for natural medicine practitioners so ATMS would recommend that if you are continuing to treat clients you do so in a way that continues to ensure health is protected. We refer you to all previously published COVID-19 information from ATMS and as always the principal source of information is the [Australian Department of Health](https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert) website:
<https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>

The decision to close practice is the decision for each practitioner based on your health, your location, your premises and the risk factors in your client group.

Continuing to practice requires mandatory advanced screening techniques before you see a client and rigorous infection control procedures. In this update we include links to a CPE approved Infection Control module that you can complete and display as a certificate in your clinic.

We also provide a brief summary of a suitable newsletter template for your clients and social media to advise that you are still able to support their health. We also include in this update information on working remotely for those modalities where it is possible. These resources were compiled by FX Medicine and provide a useful guide to the various options.

ATMS has a [policy for online consultations](#) and it is acceptable to do an initial consultation via audio-visual means. The ATMS Insurer GSA does provide coverage for online consultations however if you are with another insurer you should check the policy documents.

Finally, there is the announcement of the first round of measures for sole traders. Additional business stimulus measures were introduced over the past week including support from the major banks. We provide links to detailed information of all these measures.

COVID-19 infection control training

The Australian Government has made available a 30-minute online training module for health care workers in all settings. It covers the fundamentals of infection prevention and control for COVID-19. Full details and registration available here:

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/covid-19-infection-control-training>

NOTE: this training is approved for ATMS CPE points

Banking Assistance Available to Small Business

The Australian Traditional-Medicine Society is working with Council of Small Business Organisations Australia (COSBOA) to ensure that support is provided to small businesses to assist them through this difficult time. On Friday, Australian Banks announced they will defer repayments on loans to small businesses for a period of up to six months to assist them dealing with the current crisis.

Interest will continue to accrue on the loans but you may not need to make payments for up to 6 months. For members who have business loans, please note that our advice is that this would also apply to associated home loans as well. It is critical that you speak with your bank and discuss how this would apply to your circumstances. Further information view the full statement here:

<https://www.ausbanking.org.au/banks-small-business-relief-package/>

Supporting Australian workers and business

For Businesses that are employers

The Government is providing up to \$100,000 to eligible small and medium sized businesses, and not-for-profits (including charities) that employ people, with a minimum payment of \$20,000. These payments will help businesses' and not-for-profits' cash flow so they can keep operating, pay their rent, electricity and other bills and retain staff.

Under the enhanced scheme from the first package, employers will receive a payment equal to 100 per cent of their salary and wages withheld (up from 50 per cent), with the maximum payment being increased from \$25,000 to \$50,000. In addition, the minimum payment is being increased from \$2,000 to \$10,000. The payment will be available from 28 April 2020.

By linking the payments to business to staff wage tax withholdings, businesses will be incentivised to hold on to more of their workers.

The payments are tax free, there will be no new forms and payments will flow automatically through the ATO.

An additional payment is also being made from 28 July 2020.

For Sole Traders - Early access to Superannuation and Job Seeker

The Government will allow individuals in financial stress as a result of the Coronavirus to access up to \$10,000 of their superannuation in 2019-20 and a further \$10,000 in 2020-21.

Eligible individuals will be able to apply online through myGov for access of up to \$10,000 of their superannuation before 1 July 2020. They will also be able to access up to a further \$10,000 after

1 July 2020 for another three months. They will not need to pay tax on amounts released and the money they withdraw will not affect Centrelink or Veterans' Affairs payments.

The Government is temporarily expanding eligibility to income support payments and establishing a new, time-limited Coronavirus supplement to be paid at a rate of \$550 per fortnight. This will be paid to both existing and new recipients of the JobSeeker Payment, Youth Allowance JobSeeker, Parenting Payment, Farm Household Allowance and Special Benefit.

The Coronavirus supplement will be paid for the next 6 months. Eligible income support recipients will receive the full amount of the \$550 Coronavirus supplement on top of their payment each fortnight.

For more information about the support offered for business and workers visit:
<https://www.pm.gov.au/media/supporting-australian-workers-and-business>

BDJ have provided a summary of the COVID-19 stimulus measures that are currently available relating to immediate cash flow assistance, [click here to view the PDF](#).

ATMS office now working remotely

As from Wednesday 18 March 2020 the ATMS office began moving to working remotely. We changed our work habits as we accepted the best advice on offer that this could help to slow the spread of the virus, help ease the burden on healthcare providers and help protect the most vulnerable members of our society.

There are likely to be increased limitations on travel for non-essential services and the ATMS office will continue to support members with all staff now able to work remotely. We would encourage members to primarily use our email contact info@atms.com.au and also to provide information to ATMS via our member portal on the website.

FX Medicine - Digitise your Practice

What's becoming increasingly clear, is that for the foreseeable future, due to social distancing, we could see a downturn in the amount of face-to-face consultations that are carried out by all healthcare practitioners.

FX Medicine have put together an article with advice on how to digitalise your clinic, from online consultations to booking systems, social media and podcasts, this article offers up a range of opportunities to increase your digital footprint.

[Read the article here.](#)



Keep your clients up to date and informed

We know this is a very challenging time, and you will likely be experiencing cancellations, and postponements. To encourage your clients to keep their appointments, if they can, and to help you to inform them what you are doing to keep them safe – we have developed a number of graphics for you

to share.

Use them on your website, post on your social media channels and send them out in an email.

What shall I tell my clients?

Here's a SAMPLE EMAIL below that accredited members can use to communicate the important measures you are putting in place to keep them safe in clinic.

Dear Client,

We know that current events are creating concern in the community and we just wanted to update you on the hygiene precautions we are taking at our clinic to protect you and your family.

*****Most importantly we are asking clients with cold and flu symptoms to please reschedule until they have recovered and of course observe 14 days of self-quarantine if they have returned from anywhere overseas.*****

All our therapists are trained in Infection Control and have also undertaken to self-quarantine if they are experiencing any cold or flu symptoms.

On a happier note if you are working from home it might be a good time to get that treatment scheduled and ensure you can keep working productively.

Hygiene Precautions

We are open and have procedures in place to manage risks to keep our community healthy and safe. We will continue to respond to the current global health challenge, and we are taking regular advice from the WHO and the Australian Department of Health.

Our therapists have in place procedures to protect you and the clinic.

These include:

- * Regularly cleaning all surfaces including door knobs, frequently touched equipment and bench tops*
- * Washing our hands with soap and water regularly*
- * Keeping all staff informed*
- * Having hand sanitiser available for clients*
- * Linen is changed on massage tables after each client and any hard surfaces are cleaned between clients.*