



Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Health**



**phn**  
PERTH NORTH, PERTH SOUTH,  
COUNTRY WA  
An Australian Government Initiative

# GP URGENT CARE NETWORK PILOT

## A GUIDE FOR PRACTICE STAFF



V2: 20 August 2019



# WHAT IS THE GP URGENT CARE NETWORK PILOT?

## GENERAL INFORMATION FOR PRACTICE STAFF

Many people - adults and children - with an urgent but not life-threatening injury or illness go to an Emergency Department (ED) when they cannot be seen by their regular General Practitioner (GP).

The GP Urgent Care Network will provide an alternative by enabling people living in Metropolitan Perth, Bunbury and surrounds, to book a same day appointment online with a General Practice that belongs to the Network, has available appointments and is close to where the person lives.

Not only will this utilise unfilled appointments, it will also support continuity of care for patients in the primary care setting.

This initiative is a partnership between the Department of Health (WA) and WA Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA), with involvement from the Royal Australian College of General Practice (RACGP) WA Faculty and the Australian Medical Association (WA).

This initiative is being piloted for 18 months and will be evaluated by the University of Western Australia.

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## WHO NEEDS URGENT CARE? COMMON REASONS

The most common presentations are likely to be musculoskeletal injuries, skin and subcutaneous lacerations and wounds, gastrointestinal conditions, and illness of or injury to the eyes, ear, nose and throat. The treatment of these may require minor procedures (as clinically appropriate).

- Abdominal pain
- Infections, including urinary tract, respiratory and wound
- Nausea, vomiting
- Abrasions and minor lacerations
- Acute neck or back pain
- Constipation
- Dermatological issues including bites and rash
- Diarrhoea
- Fever
- Minor eye and ear problems
- Minor fractures, dislocations, sprains and strains
- Respiratory tract infections
- Sport injuries
- Stings and bites



## HOW WILL PATIENTS CONTACT YOUR PRACTICE FOR AN URGENT CARE APPOINTMENT?

- An online booking service through the National Health Services Directory (NHSD) will allow patients to schedule urgent care appointments themselves.
- This is integrated with the General Practice's appointment service such as HealthEngine or HotDoc.
- Work is also being progressed to integrate the Network with healthdirect Australia's triage service.
- People who contact healthdirect Australia, if assessed by the triage nurse as needing urgent care, will be provided with a link to book themselves, or alternatively transferred to the practice to make a booking if they don't have internet access.
- Some patients may contact the practice directly by phone or walk in. If they do, triage protocols are followed to determine if they can be seen by the practice, another GP Urgent Care Network practice (check availability through the NHSD) or they need to be seen by an emergency department.

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## FOLLOWING THE URGENT CARE APPOINTMENT

- Patients will be handed back to their regular GP for follow up.
- A handover/evaluation form, which is being developed, will be part of the handover process.
- The format for this form and the mechanism for sending the form to the patient's regular GP is being finalised.
- De-identified information from the handover form and evaluation surveys will be used to inform the evaluation of the Network Pilot.

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Information about the GP Urgent Care Network,  
updates and events can be found at:

[www.wapha.org.au/health-professionals/gp-urgent-care/](http://www.wapha.org.au/health-professionals/gp-urgent-care/)



# PRACTICE MANAGERS

## Some things you may need to know or do:

- Ensure staff are aware of your practice's participation in the GP Urgent Care Network and how most patients will contact the practice to make an appointment.
- Key people to be informed include:
  - GPs
  - Practice Nurses
  - Reception staff
- Complete the checklist to determine your practice's readiness to participate in the Network. (See Practice Readiness Checklist in the Resources/Forms section on the WAPHA webpage.)
- Ensure your practice has an internal triage protocol for managing urgent care appointments.
- If a patient calls or walks in and requests an urgent care appointment, triage protocols are followed to determine if they can be seen by the practice, another Urgent Care Network practice or they need to be seen by an emergency department.
- Reception staff need to know how the online booking service through the National Health Services Directory operates and be trained to inform patients of the practice's billing policy for urgent care appointments and any associated out of pocket expenses.
- Our policy is \_\_\_\_\_.
- Some patients who have booked an urgent care appointment may not require urgent care. They should be seen and billed as any other patient.
- Record these appointments to inform the evaluation.
- Your treatment room is set up and stocked for suturing and plastering – if you need to purchase any additional equipment or consumables, record this to inform the evaluation.
- Letters of agreement between your local radiology and pathology providers are in place.
- Signage is in a visible place to inform patients that the practice is a member of the GP Urgent Care Network.



# PRACTICE MANAGERS

- Your GP(s) are supported to use the handover/evaluation form for patient handovers. Please ensure these forms are retained by your practice.
- WAPHA is informed of any changes to the information provided about your practice when you joined the Network, or that is relevant to your practice's participation in the Network.
- The Pilot recognises Practice Managers may need training to ensure that they have all the information and skills required to support their practice's participation in the Network.
- WAPHA will deliver a series of workshops over the life of the Pilot which are informed by the needs of General Practices.
- Members of the Network should check the GP Urgent Care News and Alerts Section on the WAPHA webpage for information about upcoming events.

[www.wapha.org.au/health-professionals/gp-urgent-care/](http://www.wapha.org.au/health-professionals/gp-urgent-care/)



# RECEPTION STAFF

## Some things you may need to know or do:

- How the online booking service through the National Health Services Directory, which allows patients to schedule their urgent care appointments themselves, operates.
- This will be integrated with your practice’s appointment service such as HealthEngine or HotDoc.
- How to make an appointment through the National Health Services Directory for urgent care appointments.
- People who contact healthdirect Australia, if assessed by the triage nurse as needing urgent care, will be provided with a link to book themselves, or alternatively transferred to the practice to make a booking if they don’t have internet access.
- Work is being progressed to integrate the Network with healthdirect Australia’s triage service.
- Where a patient’s appointment is for urgent care, ensure your GP is informed.
- Ensure patients who have urgent care appointments are informed about your practice’s billing policy for urgent care appointments and any associated out-of-pocket costs.
- Our policy is \_\_\_\_\_
- Your practice’s internal triage protocol for managing urgent care appointments.
- If a patient calls or walks in and requests an urgent care appointment, triage protocols are followed to determine if they can be seen by the practice, referred to another GP Urgent Care Network practice or need to be seen by an emergency department.



# PRACTICE NURSES

## Some things you may need to know or do:

- When a patient arrives for their urgent care appointment, implement your triage protocol to determine if they can wait until the GP is ready to see them.
- If a patient calls or walks in and requests an urgent care appointment, triage protocols are followed to determine if they can be seen by the practice, referred to another GP Urgent Care Network practice or need to be seen by an Emergency Department.
- Ensure your treatment room is set up and stocked for suturing and plastering. The cost to urgent care patients will be as per your practice's billing policy.
- Our policy is -----
- The Pilot recognises Practice Nurses may need opportunities to develop or enhance their urgent care skills. A series of workshops over the life of the Pilot will be provided which will focus on skills and topics as identified by general practices. These training opportunities can be claimed for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) points.
- Members of the Network should check the News and Alerts Section on the WAPHA webpage for GP Urgent Care for information about upcoming events.

[www.wapha.org.au/health-professionals/gp-urgent-care/](http://www.wapha.org.au/health-professionals/gp-urgent-care/)



# DOCTORS

## Some things you may need to know or do:

- If you do not have a Practice Manager or Nurse, ensure your reception staff are provided with all relevant information about the Network.
- Following each urgent care appointment complete the handover/evaluation form, as you must hand patients back to their regular GP.
- The format for this form and the mechanism for sending it to the patient's regular GP and the Network Evaluation is being finalised.
- All participating General Practices will be advised directly when the handover/evaluation form is available. Information will also be made available on the GP Urgent Care Network webpage.
- As a member of the Network, the expectation is that letters of agreement will be in place between your practice and pathology and radiology providers to ensure that when urgent care patients are referred they are seen and managed promptly, and reports are provided back to you in a timely manner.
- Your providers know when your referrals are for an urgent care patient, when they need to be seen and whether bulk billing should be considered.
- If the patient cannot be seen by their regular GP for a follow up appointment, check if the patient can arrange an appointment with another GP in the patient's usual practice.
- If this is not possible, consider seeing the patient yourself until the patient is able to secure an appointment with their regular GP.
- The Pilot recognises that GPs and Practice Managers/Nurses may need opportunities to maintain and enhance their urgent care skills. The RACGP (WA) and WAPHA will deliver a series of workshops over the life of the Pilot which will focus on skills and topics as identified by General Practices.
- These training opportunities will attract Continuous Professional Development (CPD) points.
- Members of the Network should check the News and Alerts Section on the WAPHA Website for Urgent Care for information about up and coming events.

[www.wapha.org.au/health-professionals/gp-urgent-care/](http://www.wapha.org.au/health-professionals/gp-urgent-care/)