

COVID19 POLICY (as at 6/1/22)

Queensland has entered a new phase of the Covid-19 pandemic, where for the first time we have significant numbers of Covid-19 infections throughout the community. We have, so far, in Queensland, had a small number of cases, a small number of clusters, short lockdowns and some mask wearing. We are now seeing a large number of cases in the community which may potentially lead to a large number of hospitalisations and an increase in deaths.

This phase is one where we will be living with Covid-19 infections in the community. The hope is that a high level of vaccination will keep most people safe and prevent the hospitals and health systems from being overwhelmed. Whilst double dose vaccination of 80% of the population is a good start, it still leaves over 1 million Queenslanders more vulnerable to catching Covid-19 and suffering more severe outcomes. Other states have not seen numbers of patients adversely affected by Covid-19 becoming manageable until 90% or higher vaccination levels.

Whilst asymptomatic Covid-19 infection (that is no symptoms but infectious) seems rare, it is very likely infected persons have high viral loads and are very infectious for 1-2 days prior to symptoms developing. Current vaccines aim to block the spike protein on the surface of the Covid-19 virus thereby decreasing its ability to enter human cells and gain access to the cellular machinery that the virus uses to replicate, shed, and spread. It is clear from reliable scientific research and evidence that vaccinated people are less likely to catch the delta variant of Covid-19, are infectious for shorter periods of time, and have lower viral loads – so overall are much less likely to give the virus to another person.

This seems to have changed with the Omicron variant, where vaccinated and unvaccinated people are catching it. It seems vaccination is protecting people from the more severe outcomes of infection, with much lower hospitalisation rates than previous waves. Although individually the risk seems less, the much larger number of cases will likely see a heavy strain on hospital resources in QLD in the near future.

A negative Covid-19 PCR test means it is highly unlikely that person is shedding virus but it takes 1-2 days (or more) to get a result. The Rapid Antigen Tests are obviously much quicker but are not as reliable. This practice is not equipped with the space or PPE to collect rapid tests on the day of appointment.

Nothing is 100% so it is critical that other precautions are used:

- Social distancing
- Hand sanitising
- Mask wearing as directed by the Chief Health Officer

Goals of This Policy:

1. To minimise the chance of staff, patients and visitors catching Covid-19 / SARS whilst in the rooms
2. To minimise the chance of any, or all the staff of the practice having to quarantine. As of writing this policy, a high-risk exposure to a confirmed case within the practice would require all staff who came in contact to isolate at home for 7 days, and have a negative test before returning to work, including Dr Orford
3. To be able to continue providing a service. Dr Orford is a solo practitioner. Whilst he is in a group with five other Obstetric/Gynaecology specialists who could provide cover for childbirth and emergencies, there is no one to see the patients booked for medical appointments, or surgery through the week.



Legal Framework

Dr Orford will fully comply with the Queensland public health direction requiring the vaccination of all healthcare workers by 15 December 2021. All staff will be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 by 15 December 2021 unless they have a valid exemption and other suitable measures can be put in place.

Dr Orford requests all visitors to his practice be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Any visitors who aren't fully vaccinated should contact the practice to discuss their personal situation and how they can be supported.

Please note: Dr Orford, his staff, visitors, and patients are required to comply with all hospital rules of entry, including about COVID-19 vaccination.

In the event that Dr Orford has had a high risk contact with an infectious Covid-19 patient and/or tests positive for Covid-19:

- He will be required to isolate at home for a minimum of 7 days, with the last 48 hours without symptoms, before returning to work
- He will be unable to conduct face to face appointments – they will need to be postponed
- He will be unable to perform any surgeries or procedures – these will need to be postponed
- He will be unable to attend any births
- Hopefully births will be able to be covered by one of the other Obstetricians he shares weekend on-call with. This is assuming they are not also under quarantine orders from contact tracing
- If all Obstetricians are unavailable due to quarantine restrictions all maternity patients will need to attend SCUH (Sunshine Coast University Hospital) as a public patient

My Practice as of 6th January, 2022, until further notice:

1. All staff in my rooms are fully vaccinated
2. All patients and visitors wishing to enter the rooms are to supply a copy of their Covid-19 vaccination certificate before any appointment is made, at least one day prior to the appointment. This will be kept as part of your medical record held by Dr Orford's practice and will not be shared with anyone including other health professionals/hospitals without your explicit (written) consent
3. Visitors (including patient partners/support persons) who cannot supply evidence of vaccination are not able to enter the rooms, as directed by the Chief Health Officer. They are welcome to join the consult via telehealth if the patient wishes
4. Patients who cannot supply evidence of vaccination will be offered a tele-health visit if this is appropriate for the referral
5. Any person (staff, patients, visitors) who has any symptoms of Covid-19 (including any of the following – fever, runny nose, sore throat, cough, headache, aches and pains, loss of taste or smell, shortness of breath) will not enter the rooms, but should seek medical attention, which may include a Covid-19 test as per current Chief Health Officer advice. They should then self-isolate until they have a negative result. If the test is positive, they will need to self-isolate for 7 days from the positive test AND have not had symptoms for 48 hours. They should seek medical advice regarding monitoring of their condition and possible treatment regimens – either through their usual GP or through SCUH. Here is a link to the QLD Health Department website for up to date information - <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19>
6. A patient or staff member who has been deemed a close contact will need to isolate at home for 7 days, and have a negative rapid test on day 6, before being able to enter rooms.
7. Hand sanitiser will be supplied at the entry to the rooms and should be used prior to entry
8. Social distancing within the waiting room will be required
9. All staff, visitors and patients will be required to wear a surgical face mask (not cloth) as required by current Chief Health Officer directives. The mask must cover the mouth and nose. This, along with our staff wearing a proper mask and eye protection – will allow the contact to be deemed “low-risk” rather than high-risk, and allow us to continue working rather than isolate for a week
10. If a person has a medical exemption to mask wearing, then a medical certificate from the certifying Doctor, including the medical reason will need to be supplied prior to the appointment so that necessary measures can be implemented

Buderim Private Hospital, as of 15th December 2021, until further notice:

Uniting Care Health, who own Buderim Private Hospital, also plan to comply with QLD Government directions. This will mean:

1. All staff within the hospital will have given evidence of vaccination
2. All visitors will need to supply evidence of vaccination before being allowed entry
3. Attending childbirth will likely be a reason for exemption, but will likely require (as per QLD Government directions) that the person:
 - a. Wears PPE as directed by the hospital (ie, face mask to reduce the number of respiratory droplets that could potentially carry Covid viral particles from the wearer to others)
 - b. All visitors to have a negative covid test before entry, on each day they wish to enter the hospital
4. For surgeries, patients will be required to have a rapid antigen test on day of surgery. There will be a tent outside the entrance of the hospital where patients will be tested. If negative, surgery will proceed. If positive then the surgery won't proceed, patients will be directed to go home, isolate for 7 days, contact their GP or QLD health for how to manage their symptoms. Please arrive 30 minutes earlier than operation scheduled to allow time for this process

In addition, Buderim Private Hospital is currently designated a "covid clean" hospital by Qld Health, and is aiming to not have any known Covid-19 positive cases as it does not have the ideal infrastructure to minimise spread. On the Sunshine Coast all these cases are to be managed at the Sunshine Coast University Hospital (SCUH). To achieve this:

- Any patients with symptoms suggestive of Covid-19 will not be allowed entry to the hospital grounds but will be re-directed to SCUH. This will include pregnant women, even in labour, and even if vaccinated
- Any patient with a positive Covid-19 test will not be admitted but will be redirected to SCUH
- Women are advised to be mindful of social distancing, sanitising, mask wearing if needed, to continue to decrease this risk

Consent

Please tick yes or no below to indicate if you consent to:

Supplying evidence of Covid-19 vaccinations for myself	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Authorising copies of my Covid-19 vaccination status being kept as part of my medical records held at Dr Orford's practice. I understand this will not be shared with anyone including other health professionals/hospitals without my explicit (written) consent	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Supplying evidence of Covid-19 vaccinations for my partner/support person prior to each attendance	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Following all current QLD Government and Chief Health Officer directives relating to Covid -19	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Informing staff prior to attendance if I or my partner/support person shows symptoms of Covid-19	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Informing staff prior to attendance if I or my partner/support person has been to a hot spot or in contact with a Covid-19 positive person	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

Patient Acknowledgement - I acknowledge I have read the above information and understand the requirements of Dr James Orford's Practice with regards to their Practice Covid-19 policy. I understand, should I not give my consent, that alternative arrangements will be made for my care which may include, but is not limited to, where appropriate, telehealth consultations or a referral to another clinician

Name:		Signature:		Date:	/ /
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Once you have ticked and signed the form, please email to:

admin@drjamesorford.com.au