

## First Aid, Covid-19 and social distancing

As first aiders you may be wondering how to maintain Covid-19 social distancing requirements and still physically interact with colleagues, students and visitors who need first aid assistance. This guidance incorporates the latest advice from NSW Health, St John Ambulance, Royal Life Saving and WHO.



With the appropriate precautions and reasonable adjustments in place we believe that on balance, the benefits of first aid to the University community far outweigh the very low risk of anyone having or being exposed to COVID-19.

The aim of first aid is to:

- preserve life
- prevent illness or injury from becoming worse
- relieve pain, if possible
- promote recovery
- protect the unconscious

In relation to your duty of care, there is no legal obligation for first aiders to provide first aid in a general public context. However, first aid officers in workplaces do have a duty of care.

### Minimise the risk

When assessing an injured person, your priority should always be to minimise any risk to yourself. Treat every situation as if the person could potentially be infected with a contagious disease or virus and implement the appropriate safeguards you have been trained to use when rendering first aid and especially cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

If CPR is required, provide compressions only, instead of a combination of breaths and compressions.

### Take precautionary measures

Practice usual cross infection precautionary measures by using appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), such as examination gloves and fluid repellent surgical face mask. When using a face mask ensure it is fitted correctly:

- Make sure it covers your nose and mouth and fits snugly under your chin, over the bridge of your nose and against the sides of your face.
- Do not touch the front of the mask while it is on or when removing it (and if you do so accidentally, wash or clean your hands immediately).
- Always [wash your hands](#) before putting on and after removing both gloves and face mask.
- Dispose of clinical waste (sharps, human tissue or fluids, used dressings and PPE) appropriately.

Check your first aid kit is stocked with PPE and purchase additional supplies if you would like to have some with you at all times. Supplies can be ordered from [St John Ambulance](#) or a local pharmacy. If you are based at Callaghan campus supplies can be purchased from the [pharmacy in the Shortland Building](#).

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your work and care as a UON first aider.

Please remember to report all first aid incidents in [AIMS](#). Further information for first aid officers can be found here - <https://www.newcastle.edu.au/current-staff/working-here/work-health-and-safety/first-aid/information-for-first-aid-officers>. If you have any further queries please contact the Health & Safety Team at [Usafe@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:Usafe@newcastle.edu.au) or on extension 39999 (#5).

## References:

- Australian Government: Department of Health, 28 May 2020, *Use of masks by the public in the community*, <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-use-of-masks-by-the-public-in-the-community>
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- St John Ambulance Australia, 27 March 2020, *Don't spread it – infection control when providing first aid*, <https://www.stjohnvic.com.au/news/infection-control-providing-first-aid/>
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- World Health Organisation, 20 October 2015, *How to handwash? With soap and water (Youtube)*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3PmVJQUCm4E>