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GET COVID TESTED – KEEP US ALL SAFE
Caution needed in the community, not complacency

The South Australian COVID-19 outbreak highlights the need for all Australians to remain vigilant and be tested for the virus, AMA President Dr Omar Khorshid said today.

The rapid escalation of cases linked to the Adelaide cluster – from four infections on Sunday to 17 today – is of particular concern, Dr Khorshid said.

South Australia has moved to open up significantly after a long period of no community transmission, which makes the community more vulnerable to outbreaks as a result.

“There is no doubt that people are becoming more complacent as restrictions ease and governments aim for ‘COVID-normal’ by Christmas,” Dr Khorshid said.

“We must accept that until there is an effective vaccine, we must live with restrictions and remain COVID-cautious.”

Restriction fatigue, falling numbers of infections and mixed government messaging all appear to be contributing to people becoming complacent, resulting in the significant drop in COVID testing across many parts of the country.

“Getting a COVID test is fundamental to being able to keep COVID-19 contained,” Dr Khorshid said.

“People who do not get tested or delay getting tested for a few days after symptoms set in are putting their families, friends, and colleagues at risk. COVID-19 is a highly infectious disease that can spread rapidly.”

COVID-19 symptoms include a dry cough, runny nose, sore throat, fever, headache, loss of taste or smell, and other flu-like symptoms.

Dr Khorshid said even if people only have one of these symptoms, or their symptoms are quite mild, they should still get tested.

“When you have symptoms, you should also self-isolate until you get a negative test result – this includes staying away from work,” he said.

“People in self-isolation can still access medical care, with telehealth services available under Medicare.”

Older people are particularly at risk of dying from COVID-19, but this does not mean that younger people can ignore symptoms.

“Not only can they pass it on to the people that they know and love, we know that COVID-19 may have long-term health consequences for any age group,” Dr Khorshid said.

Governments must also keep the community informed about COVID-19 with simple and clear messages that explain the risks associated with the virus.

“Testing, the rapid reporting of results. and contact tracing are central to our COVID-19 response, and the effective resourcing of these must remain a priority for all governments.”

The AMA communique on COVID-19 and the measures required to tackle the virus and support economic recovery is at <https://ama.com.au/article/ama-federal-council-covid-19-communiqué>

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