



**AUSTRALIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION**  
**(SOUTH AUSTRALIA) INC.**  
ABN 91 028 693 268

## **COVID-19 AN UNWELCOME HOLIDAY COMPANION**

**The prevalence of COVID cases demonstrates that South Australians should take action to minimise the effect of COVID-19 on their businesses, lives and holiday plans, Australian Medical Association (SA) President Dr John Williams says.**

**He said the new SA Health requirement that a patient must have a GP referral to access a PCR to confirm their symptoms will add significant strain to a general practice sector already in crisis.**

Dr Williams said an increase in the number of reported COVID cases last week suggested that many people were infected during Christmas-week gatherings.

SA Health data released on Friday showed there were 1,974 new notified cases in the most recent seven-day reporting period, compared to 1,475 the previous week – an increase of 34 per cent.

Dr Williams said that as some people return to work this week, and others set off for or continued holidays, it is important that steps are taken to minimise the risk of infection.

'No one wants their new year to start with being sick with COVID,' Dr Williams said. 'Unfortunately, COVID is still here, and it can still lead to days or weeks of illness – and in doing so destroy valuable holidays or limit your capacity to return to work refreshed for the year ahead.'

Dr Williams said symptoms of the latest variants include nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea, in addition to:

- fever or chills
- sore throat
- cough
- shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- fatigue
- headache
- muscle or body aches
- congestion or runny nose.

'People who are experiencing nausea and vomiting should check other symptoms – it may be a case of COVID-19 rather than gastro or food poisoning,' Dr Williams said.

He said South Australians looking to diagnose their symptoms should be aware of new guidelines around the availability of PCR tests that will make it harder for people to confirm their symptoms and report accurate diagnoses.

The SA Health website states that South Australians now 'need a GP referral to have PCR testing at select dedicated SA Pathology and private pathology providers'.

'This means more people will be seeking referrals from their GPs – just when access to GPs is difficult,' Dr Williams said.

'It continues to be very important that people in the higher-risk categories can access medical support, including quick access to anti-virals, if COVID-19 has been confirmed.

'Patients who have symptoms and believe they may have COVID-19 but have tested negative on RATs should contact their GPs for advice.'

Dr Williams urged people with positive RATs to record their information.

'The more information we have, the better placed we are to manage COVID-19 and subsequent pandemics, as well as the health, social and economic impacts of these illnesses on patients and communities.'

Dr Williams said it remains important that people consider how they can minimise the risk of infection for themselves and each other.

The AMA continues to recommend:

- having another booster if it's six months since your last one or your most recent COVID infection, and especially if you're in the higher-risk categories, including aged care residents
- wearing a mask if you think there's a risk, especially in confined spaces such as planes, and to avoid transmission to an older person or a small child
- practising good hygiene, including hand-washing and distancing
- staying away from others if you have symptoms and test to check.

**For more information or interview requests please contact Dr John Williams on 0417 804 212 or Senior Policy and Communications Advisor Karen Phillips on 0402 103 451.**