

MANLY


Northern beaches coronavirus: Two COVID-19 clinics open for most at risk

Two special COVID-19 clinics have opened on the beaches for those most at risk of the disease, while those referred by GPs to private clinics say there's a long wait list.

Julie Cross, Manly Daily

 Subscriber only | March 11, 2020 7:00am



 Patient wearing mask with face blurred is seen by triage nurse at Northern Beaches Hospital's new COVID-19 clinic. Picture: Tim Pascoe

Northern Beaches Hospital has opened a COVID-19 clinic for those most at risk of having the disease.

Another clinic has also opened at Mona Vale Hospital.

On Tuesday afternoon patients at Northern Beaches Hospital were being met outside the front of the emergency department by a triage nurse decked in protective glasses, a mask, gloves and a disposal gown, before being escorted for testing if found to meet the criteria.

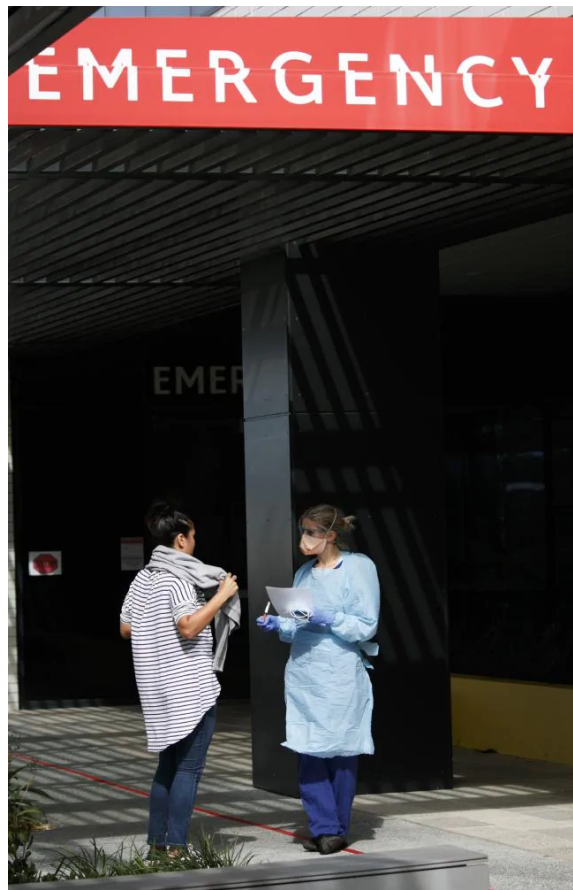


📷 Northern Beaches Hospital has set up an exclusive area for people suffering from symptoms of the coronavirus. Photo: Tim Pascoe

There had been a steady stream of people requesting tests all day, according to an observer with four waiting when the *Manly Daily* arrived.

In 15 minutes only one of the four seen was asked to don a mask and was taken for testing. The others were given a sheet of health information and sent away.

The current criteria for swabbing at emergency departments is strict and staff are only admitting those who have any symptoms of fever, cough, shortness breath, muscle aches, or chills, as well as having been or had close contact with someone who has been to mainland China, Iran, Italy, South Korea, Cambodia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Singapore and Thailand, or been in contact with a confirmed or suspected case of coronavirus in the last 14 days.



📷 Northern Beaches Hospital has a new COVID-19 clinic. Picture: Tim Pascoe

Dr Caroline Rogers, a GP from Narrabeen said people had been swamping GP surgeries with requests for testing this week because many employers were telling them they could not come back to work unless they had a negative result for COVID-19.

Many of those don't meet the emergency department criteria hence the long waiting list for test appointments at private pathology laboratories.

Dr Rogers said there was a lot of anxiety in the community.

“People are being cautious and are trying to do the right thing,” she said.

“I've heard people are having to wait a few days for a test and then a few more for the results.”

She said patients who had been to the new COVID-19 clinics had reported the system was efficient and they were in and out within a few hours.



📷 Northern Beaches Hospital is trialling a COVID-19 clinic. Photo: Tim Pascoe

In a Northern Beaches Hospital staff newsletter it said it was trialling the clinic as an extension of the emergency department: “People are advised to ring the ED intercom and they will be escorted to the clinic for testing to minimise any risk to other people waiting in ED”.

The newsletter also reassured staff that the hospital was operating as normal and it had high infection control standards.

One woman in her 30s was admitted with the coronavirus at Northern Beaches Hospital last week and has been isolated.

It is also understood a second person has also been admitted, although NSW Health was not able to confirm this at the time of publication.



📷 Mona Vale Hospital also has a COVID-19 clinic.
Photo: Tim Pascoe

A hospital source said the new \$600m hospital was better designed than most for the fight against the coronavirus with more than 150 single rooms and up to 20 negative pressure isolation rooms, designed to help prevent the spread of infectious diseases, as well as special rooms in intensive care.

“We have more single rooms than most hospitals, more isolation rooms and a low infection rate,” the source said.

Dr Rogers said there was some great advice online from Healthdirect and people could call the COVID-19 Hotline — 1800 020 080 — although some patients were reporting it was hard to get through.