

Resources and training opportunities for GPs

GP News - December 2024

As the end of the year approaches, we would like to thank you for the incredible care you provide, especially our dedicated Shared Maternity Care Affiliates. Wishing you all a safe and happy festive season!

In this edition:

- Public Fertility Care update
- Maternity RSV vaccine
- New caesarean fact sheet
- Vulvar Disorders and Dermatology Clinic
- CPD opportunities
- Antiseizure medications in pregnancy: research survey

If you have any feedback or questions, please [email the GP Liaison team](#).

Public Fertility Care update

The Women's leads Public Fertility Care, a Victorian Government-funded IVF and fertility service operating in partnership with 10 Victorian public hospitals. We recently celebrated one year in operation and 50 babies born!

Under the Public Fertility Care model, there is a maximum of two treatment cycles (IVF or ICSI) per person (per lifetime) including subsequent transfer of all embryos collected during those cycles.

While Public Fertility Care is free, there may be some costs incurred outside of the service for medications or investigations by a pathology and/or diagnostic service. It is still a very affordable service and available to all eligible Victorians.

The average wait time for the first appointment is 6 to 8 weeks after the referral is accepted.

Referral updates

- Please send referrals to the Women's and we will triage the patient to their local participating hospital.
- The range of tests and investigations required with a referral has recently been updated, with fewer mandatory tests.
- All tests and investigations must have been completed within the last 12 months - unless otherwise specified.



Eligibility, tests and referral instructions

Download and print a 2-page summary: [GP Referral Guidelines - Public Fertility Care \(PDF, 402 KB\)](#).

Or learn more on our website: [Public Fertility Care - For GPs](#)



Maternal RSV program

In 2025, eligible pregnant women will be able to receive the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccine for free under the National Immunisation Program. Details of the rollout will be confirmed by the Department of Health next year.

A single dose of the RSV vaccine Abrysvo will be recommended for women 28-36 weeks pregnant, to

protect their baby.

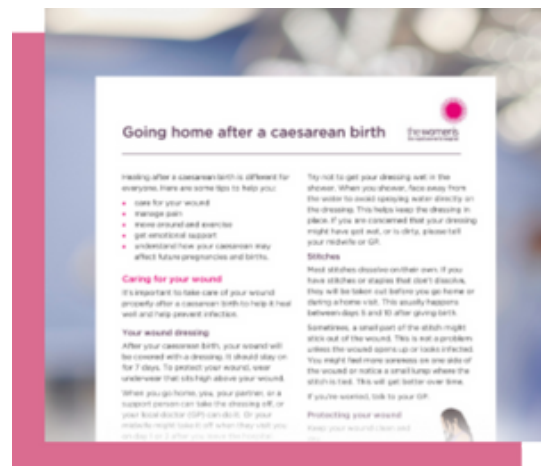
RSV is a serious disease in infants, often affecting the lower respiratory tract, and is a leading cause of hospitalisation. Maternal immunisation can reduce the risk of severe RSV disease by 70 per cent in infants under 6 months.

More information: [RSV, Australian Immunisation Handbook](#)

Going home after a caesarean

The Women's has published a new patient factsheet to support women recovering from a caesarean birth. It includes information about:

- caring for the wound
- pain management
- movement and exercise
- emotional support
- understanding how a caesarean may affect future pregnancies and birth.



Download and share this useful guide with your patients: [Going home after a caesarean birth \(PDF, 132 KB\)](#).

Vulvar Disorders and Dermatology Clinic

The Women's specialist Vulvar Disorders and Dermatology Clinic provides assessment and care for persistent vulvar pain, abnormal appearance of the vulva, and vulval itch or vulvovaginal candidiasis that has not responded to treatment.

The clinic sees patients who have the Women's as their closest service.

Investigations - biopsy prior to referral

Waiting periods for the Vulvar Disorders and Dermatology Clinic are generally long for non-urgent patients. To assist in triage, it is recommended a skin punch biopsy (with histopathology) be performed by the GP prior to referral, if possible, for the following types of presentations:

- skin changes
- suspected vulvar/vaginal intraepithelial neoplasia (VIN/VAIN)
- pigmented mole
- any lesion on the vulva.

Guidance on assessment and management of vulval/vaginal conditions in primary care:

[Pruritus Vulvae - HealthPathways Melbourne](#)

[Vulval and Vaginal Pain \(Vulvodynia\) - HealthPathways Melbourne](#)

Patients not covered by Medicare

Information for your patients who are Medicare-ineligible (not covered by or eligible for Medicare).

Medicare-ineligible patients can be treated in a public hospital but are responsible for the full cost of all treatment provided.

We accept care based on referral criteria that applies to both Medicare-ineligible and eligible patients. Find criteria by service, on our website at [Referrals](#).

When referring a patient, please discuss with them if the care is medically required during their stay in Australia. Advise them to:

- Discuss their coverage with their insurance provider before they access treatment in a public hospital or through a private specialist.
- Review the cost of their treatment at the Women's before attending (further details below).
- Explore other care options based on these discussions.

Current fees for Medicare-ineligible patients are available on our [Patient fees & billing webpage](#).

When upfront payment is required

Medicare-ineligible patients attending Women's Emergency Care (WEC), Early Pregnancy Assessment Service (EPAS) and outpatient appointments are required to pay upfront for their treatment, regardless of their insurance status. If insured, they can then make a claim from their relevant insurer.

It is important patients understand all out-of-pocket costs involved. In some cases, private services may be more cost-effective for a patient, and these options should be explored prior to referral.

If you or your patients have any queries or would like to discuss options and financial responsibilities, please contact the Women's Private Patient Liaison Officer:

- Phone [\(03\) 8345 2929](tel:(03)83452929)
- Email pplo@thewomens.org.au



CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Women's GP continuing professional development program has finished for the year, but you can still watch webinar recordings via our website – go to [GP continuing professional development](#).

Available to watch on-demand:

- Public Fertility Care webinar (October 2024)
- Shared Maternity Care workshops (October 2024)
- Perinatal mental health and psychotropic medicines in pregnancy (October 2024)
- Cervical and breast cancer: risk-based screening and management (August 2024)

Do you have ideas for maternity or women's health webinar topics for 2025? Please email us: gp.liaison@thewomens.org.au

Online course

Follow-up after early medical abortion

Type: Self-paced, approx 45 min

Cost: Free

Description: This new course developed by the Women's delivers foundation knowledge and skills required to provide comprehensive best practice early medical abortion care.

It is designed for medical practitioners as well as nurses, midwives, pharmacists and social workers.

Registration and more information: [Follow up after early medical abortion, Women's Health Victoria](#)

This course builds on the first online course on this topic: [Early Medical Abortion, Women's Health Victoria](#).

Online course

Cervical screening, HPV and self-collection

Type: Self-paced online learning course



Cost: Free

Description: This course has a strong focus on HPV self-collection including:

- presenting the latest evidence and the current self-collection policy
- outlining when self-collection is not appropriate, and
- an in-depth look at the screening pathway.

It is an RACGP CPD accredited activity and developed by VCS Pathology, Australian Centre for the Prevention of Cervical Cancer and the Victorian Government.

Registration and more information: [GPEx platform](#)



Online courses

Managing menopause and polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)

Type: Self-paced online learning courses

Cost: \$75 per course

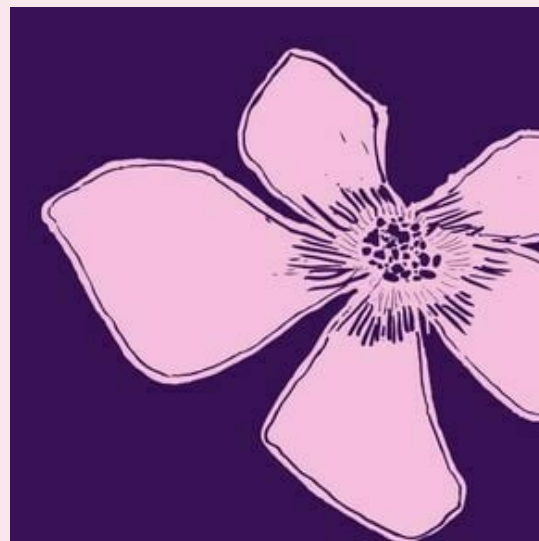
Description: There are two separate courses.

The first aims to help GPs provide well-informed, up-to-date advice and treatment in the care and management of women during menopause.

The second course will help you better understand, diagnose and manage PCOS.

Both courses are RACGP CPD-accredited activities.

Registration and more information: [Jean Hailes for Women's Health](#)



Antiseizure medications in pregnancy

Research survey

The University of Melbourne invites you to participate in a 5 to 10 minute online survey about antiseizure medications in pregnancy.

The survey seeks to understand current clinician practices, including pre-conception counselling and prescribing for patients of childbearing age who require antiseizure medications.

Your response will support future guidelines and research.

[Start the survey.](#)

Contact us

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E: gp.liaison@thewomens.org.au

Fast Fax Referral

F: [\(03\) 8345 3036](tel:(03)83453036)

GP Quick Access Number

P: [\(03\) 8345 2058](tel:(03)83452058)

Shared Maternity Care Coordinator

P: [\(03\) 8345 2129](tel:(03)83452129)

E: shared.care@thewomens.org.au

The Women's Switchboard

P: [\(03\) 8345 2000](tel:(03)83452000)

The Women's Abortion &

Contraception Service

P: [\(03\) 8345 2832](tel:(03)83452832) (professional line only
– not for use by women needing the
service)

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