

RACS COVID-19 Event Safety Strategy

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1 Purpose

The purpose of this strategy is to establish standards and guidelines that will enable the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) to deliver activities across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand (AoNZ) in a safe environment under Coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions when applicable.

2 Introduction

COVID-19 is a rapidly evolving situation across Australia and AoNZ and local Governments impose varying degrees of restrictions which are dependent on the level of risk for COVID-19 transmissions at that time. These restrictions are subject to rapid change.

RACS also uses a variety of different venues across Australia and AoNZ to deliver activities and events. Venue owners and operators are responsible for ensuring that specific public health measures applicable to their venue (as set out in legislation) are understood and implemented by event organisers operating in their venues. Event organisers are responsible for ensuring that the venue COVID Safe plan is appropriate for the type of event being held at that venue.

Where an event is held at a RACS venue, the RACS venue COVID Safe plan will be applicable.

All participants and employees at RACS events and activities must abide by the venue and Government regulations in place at the time of the event. Prior to each event, all attendees will receive a correspondence detailing the measures in place for the event based on local requirements. Please see relevant government site for details:

- [Australian Capital Territory](#)
- [New South Wales](#)
- [Northern Territory](#)
- [Queensland](#) & www.qld.gov.au to search border restrictions
- [South Australia](#)
- [Tasmania](#)
- [Victoria](#) & [DHHS](#)
- [Western Australia](#)
- [Aotearoa New Zealand](#)
- [Australian Department of Health](#)

3 Guiding Principles

The following principles will be applied to all RACS activities and events:

- RACS will act in the best interests of patient care and the community.
- RACS will act in the best interests of all RACS staff and stakeholders.
- RACS will seek to maintain the quality and standards of all activities.
- RACS will resume mandatory courses and activities where possible to minimise the impact on training and assessment.
- RACS will seek to find efficiencies and develop new ways of working that provide opportunities to meet virtually.
- RACS will act consistently, transparently and fairly across all its activities.
- RACS will act within the parameters of current government COVID-19 advice.
- RACS will inform stakeholders with as much notice as possible notice of all major decisions and mitigation strategies.

- RACS will continually monitor the risks and change protocols and processes as required.
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4 COVID-19 Control Measures

The following control measures will be applicable to RACS events or activities when required by the local government and / or venue in which the activity is taking place. Please note, this list is not exhaustive, and all participants and staff involved in a RACS event or activity must comply with the conditions applicable to that activity. These will be communicated to you prior to your attendance at the event or activity.

4.1 CONDITIONS OF ENTRY

RACS will communicate to all participants attending a RACS event the conditions of entry prior to the event. These include:

- All participants and employees must abide by the venue and/or government regulations in place at the time of the event.
- By attending a RACS event you agree to abide by the health and safety measures which can include, but are not limited to, vaccination, physical distancing, temperature screening, testing, masks, sanitisation and restricted public access. Failure to comply with these measures may result in you being removed from the event.
- You must not attend a RACS event in any of the following circumstances:
 - You have symptoms of COVID-19
 - You have symptoms following a negative COVID-19 test
 - You have been identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19*
 - You are waiting for the result of a COVID-19 test
 - You are required to isolate or quarantine
 - You have tested positive for COVID-19 and are considered an active case.

**As of 24 January, the Australian [DoH](#) declared that you are a close contact if you either live in the same house as someone who tests positive, spent four hours or longer with someone in a home, or health or aged care environment or are determined as one by your state or territory health department.*

**As of 24 February the AoNZ [MoH](#) declared that you are a close contact if you have been close (within 1.5 metres) to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 for more than 15 minutes and they were not wearing a mask or was not wearing it properly, had direct contact with respiratory secretions or saliva from the person with COVID-19 (kissing, shared a drink receptacle etc) and spent time in an indoor space for more than one hour with a person with COVID-19.*

These conditions apply to all entrants attending the event.

Venue operators have the right to deny entry to anyone who refuses to adhere to these health and safety measures.

4.2 COVID SAFE AND COVID TRACKER APPLICATIONS

RACS encourages the use of the Australian Government's COVIDSafe mobile app and the AoNZ Government's COVID Tracer App. Event attendees are required to check in to their event venue via the relevant mobile application.

4.3 HYGIENE

Good hygiene is critical for slowing the spread of COVID-19 and is everyone's responsibility. People attending RACS events should not shake hands or make physical contact as a greeting. Also, people should always avoid touching their face.

We encourage everyone to wash their hands with soap regularly or use hand sanitisers containing at least 60 per cent alcohol.

4.4 COUGH ETIQUETTE

To avoid the spread of COVID-19 it is essential that people use a tissue to cover their nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing. If a tissue is not available, cough or sneeze into your elbow. After coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose ensure you wash your hands with soap or use the hand sanitisers that are available at each event.

4.5 PEDESTRIAN FLOW

Where applicable, RACS will use signage and decals to guide the flow of pedestrians within the venue. Please ensure you follow these signs and the direction of staff.

4.6 CONTACT TRACING

If someone falls sick at an event or within 14 days after attending a RACS event we encourage that they should get tested for COVID-19 as soon as possible.

If you test positive to COVID-19, please notify RACS immediately. RACS will provide contact details of every person who attended the event to the relevant authority.

RACS will also contact everyone who attended the event and provide regular updates and support.

4.7 PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Where physical distancing measures are a requirement of the local Government where an event is being held, signage to remind people to follow physical distancing measures and decal distance markers are placed in high traffic areas such as registration tables or food and beverage areas.

Tables and rooms will be set in a format that allows for appropriate physical distancing between all participants. Numbers of participants will be capped at the maximum number of people allowed to gather indoors at that location or at the maximum capacity the room allows to meet physical distancing requirements.

4.8 TEMPERATURE CHECKS

Early detection of COVID-19 and isolation of infected people is key for assisting in slowing the spread of the virus. Some venues utilised by RACS require temperature checks as a condition of entry. Please see 'withdrawals and cancellations' for information on what happens if you are not able to attend a RACS event for COVID-19 reasons.

4.9 STAGGERED ENTRY TIMES

Larger events and activities may require staggered entry times. Please carefully review your information and allow more time to travel to the event.

4.10 PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

For activities where physical distancing cannot be maintained participants may be required to wear a mask where Government regulations require this. If face masks are mandated by the local government at the time of the event, then face masks must always be worn.

Wearing gloves does not stop the spread of a virus; it has been shown it stops people cleaning their hands when they should. The use of gloves and other forms of PPE such as gowns and eye protection will continue to be used as is standard practice during 'hands on' RACS activities for instance where mouldaged actors are used in clinical scenarios or skill stations.

5 Other Information

5.1 CANCELLATIONS AND WITHDRAWALS

Cancellation and withdrawal policies will apply as per the relevant policy for that event. These can be found on the RACS website at: <https://www.surgeons.org/en>

If the event is cancelled or postponed due to COVID-19, RACS will refund participants the event registration fee. If an attendee is not able to attend the event for compassionate reasons (e.g. sickness, death in family, COVID requirements (like isolation or work restrictions) the registration fee will be refunded. This will be determined on a case by case basis, please contact your event organiser as soon as possible if you are not able to attend the event.

Please note there may be administration costs that are non-refundable.

RACS is not responsible for any costs incurred by event participants including, but not limited to, flights, transportation, accommodation, and any other fees and charges.

6 Contact Details

For further information please contact the relevant RACS Department who is responsible for the Activity or Event you are attending.