

Blog: 17/08/2020

With this sudden latest outbreak here in South Auckland we swung back into our already well-practiced routine, and so did our patients, who this time knew what to expect. We are back to ringing patients first to see whether they need to come in, and arranging for them to come in if we need to look or feel, or examine in other ways. Please be reassured we will always see you if you want to see us in person. Sometimes if the patient has the technology we ask them to send a pic to <[admin@tiakinateora.co.nz](mailto:admin@tiakinateora.co.nz)> so the doctor can look at it too and ring back to discuss it with the patient. . However many calls it still counts as one consultation! But it's amazing how much we can sort out over the phone.

If you do need to come to the surgery, we get you to ring when you get to the carpark and a nurse in full PPE Covid-19 gear will bring you in via one of the doors, the front door or the side door which feeds into the treatment room.

Please don't even touch door handles, but we disinfect after every single patient. If you haven't got a mask on we will give you one to wear while you are with us, and you can keep that for future use too.

Masks are now proven to be useful to markedly reducing the spread of the virus. It's less about what type of mask than how it is worn. Loose isn't good which is why the homemade sort tied up around the head are more effective than we thought. Some of the bought masks especially those with ear loops are too loose and effectiveness is down to trapping maybe 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the steam particles that can carry the covid-19 virus [Sars-Cov-2] - but even then the distance, the other 2/3<sup>rds</sup> of covid-19 covered particles can go is markedly reduced to less than a meter . An important article in the Journal of the American Medical Association: Internal Medicine [pub Aug 11<sup>th</sup> 20] published a few days ago examined the types of masks and their efficiency. The big take home messages in their article relate to tying the mask on tightly- I tie off a big loop in my ear loops now before I put them on and tuck the mask firmly under my chin- and how respirators are not needed on the N95 masks as they filter incoming air, but not outgoing air. Respirator type N95 masks are only recommended for dentists and medical professionals who maybe causing an infected spray cloud. Also the studies show even old unused masks well past their expiry date work fine: they tested ones up to 11 years past expiry date. I suppose the best message is masks left on a shelf or in the car don't work!

Masks can be reused if handled carefully as if contaminated at the end of use. 4 hours maximum use at a time, but if they are put aside they can be reused in 4 days time again, or they can be washed in hot soapy water , rinsed and used again once dry. Disinfecting solutions, steam or sprays are a bit more tricky, especially around Covid-19 masks and we don't recommend this in general, though soaking them in alcohol [ethanol] and reusing them could be fun and hi-jinks. Strong solutions like this, or heat like in steam and ironing can damage many masks and make them less effective.

We have learnt so much about Covid-19 now and next week I will blog with all the latest international updates in knowledge. Until then, be well, be safe.

From all the team at Tiakina Te Ora, Drs Jacqueline, Mick and Cathy, nurses Paulette, Shannon and Angie, receptionists Anjana , Ana and Jane and our wonderful practice manager Meriana.