



2022 Infection Prevention & Control for General Practice

Feb – e newspaper # 1 – Improving ventilation according to your situation

A word on Rapid Antigen Testing

If you are using it for monitoring / surveillance then 2-3 times per week is advised but do not rely on this as a substitute for safe work practices. Remain observant of symptoms in your household members. If you and other members visit crowded indoor areas, then that puts at risk others around you regardless of how many RATs you perform.

A word on omicron variants

These are far more infectious than previous variants and immune escape is causing breakthrough infection. We do not know everyone for whom the vaccine does not work so keep up precautions and protect others

So now that we have finally accepted that SARS-CoV-2 is transmitted by the airborne route in tiny aerosols that dry off and remain suspended for hours in closed rooms (as well as by large droplets that fall close to an infected person), perhaps we can be serious about improving air exchange and airflow in our workplaces where staff to staff transmission is a risk. Here are some actions that practices can take to reduce overall risk of transmission.

I have put forward some common situations in practices – see what ventilation improvements you can make to yours

1. Natural ventilation i.e if you have windows, open them.
2. For your front and back door, fit each with a security screen and leave open to increase air flow.
3. Reduce the number of admin/reception working in the same breathing space - use the waiting room (now unused) to place an admin staff especially near the door (distancing of 1.5m for airborne spread is not effective)
4. If you have a fan only use it on the lowest setting
5. Heating Ventilation Air Con systems (HVAC) bring in fresh filtered air – grade of filter can be increased. Adjust to increase the proportion of fresh air to at least 40% with 8 air changer per hour). Clean grills and vents regularly
6. If you have a split system instead of HVAC, operate the fan on low only and not below 21 C
7. For a split system, fresh air can enter either through an open window or a vent. For the best result, install a vent with an exhaust fan to draw air out so that fresh air is drawn in through the window. If you don't have windows that can open, install two vents a few metres apart with an exhaust fan in one – outlets must be well spaced.
8. Portable air cleaners / air purifiers – these can add an extra layer of protection by filtering the air in the room roughly every 45 minutes. To get fresh air in, consider the two vent system if you don't have an HVAC.
9. See symptomatic patients outside where air changes are unlimited and therefore safer
10. Avoid congregating in the kitchen – only use it to prepare a drink or warm a meal. Mask removal combined with talking this the highest risk area.