SYMPTOM MANAGEMENT AT HOME: FAMILY/PRIMARY CAREGIVER INFORMATION

The main symptoms that people with COVID-19 experience are:

- fever
- body aches and pains
- difficulty breathing or feeling short of breath - this can often cause anxiety/worry

Your nurse/doctor/community health worker will explain how to treat these symptoms. Medicines taken by mouth will be used as much as possible. Even if patients are unable to swallow, medicines can be given in other simple ways at home. This will be explained if needed.

Below are some simple things you can do to keep your loved one comfortable at home.

### For pain and fever:

- Paracetamol (this is dispensed under various trade names such as panado, adconapamol, dolorol, painamol, painblok, paramed) can be used. Give 2 x 500mg tablets every 6 hours day and night.
- If patient is feverish remove extra blankets/coverings until they cool down.
- You can also put a cool cloth on the forehead or the back of the neck.
- If fever is very high you can sponge or wipe down the face and upper body using cool (not cold or icy) water until they cool down.
- If you are worried phone your GP, palliative care nursing sister or clinic for advice.

### For difficulty breathing or shortness of breath

- Open windows and doors and allow fresh air to move across the patient’s face if possible. This is VERY helpful.
- Speak in calm and reassuring tones. Try not to add to their worry/anxiety.
- Encourage them to try to breathe out through pursed lips. They should pucker or partly close their lips firmly (as though they are going to blow out a candle) leaving just enough space for air to escape and blow air out against the resistance until it feels as though all the air is out of their lungs before taking a next breath in. Do this for a few breaths then breath normally again. Repeat as need be.
- Use extra pillows, or any kind of support, to prop the patient up so that the upper body is elevated to help the patient breathe easier.
- If you are worried phone your GP, palliative care nursing sister or clinic for advice.

### For anxiety/agitation/worry

- Family should be as calm and reassuring as possible.
- Address factors that can agitate a patient
  - Full bladders: assist to use the bathroom at regular intervals to empty the bladder.
  - Constipation: use of oral laxatives as mentioned above, encourage fluids, encourage mobilization if possible.
  - Noise: try to ensure a quiet and calm environment for the patient.
  - Thirst: small sips of water throughout the day, ice-chips in a cup next to the bed, wet cloth to suck if swallowing difficult.
  - Pain: manage pain with medication as prescribed by the healthcare team
- Create a relaxing environment for the patient (decrease noise)
- Make contact with any community members who usually provide religious/spiritual/emotional support if possible, in a way that is safe and does not put them at risk of COVID-19 infection.
- If you are worried phone your GP, palliative care nursing sister or clinic for advice.