



NAMDS

National Association for
Medical Deputising

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

MEDIA RELEASE POSSIBLE SWINE FLU PANDEMIC

Who is NAMDS?

NAMDS is the National Association for Medical Deputising Services and represents the organisations who provide after hours home visiting doctors in Australia. It was formed in 1992 and seeks to:

- Facilitate and encourage high standards of after hours primary medical care.
- Develop and negotiate definitions and standards for medical deputizing in Australia with Government, the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and accreditation bodies to the betterment of patients, subscribing GPs and members.

How many members does NAMDS have?

NAMDS has 11 members who provide services across Australia.

To give you an idea of how widespread our member's services are, NAMDS members provide after hours care to patients of over 6,500 day-time GPs covering 13,600,00 Australians. NAMDS after hours services carry out over 750,000 patient contacts each year.

Member services are:

Melbourne Australian Locum Medical Service
www.medicaust.com.au

Sydney (South and Central) Sydney Medical Co-operative
www.sydney.com.au

Sydney (North and Western) Family Care Medical Services (Sydney)
www.familycare.com.au

Sydney (Eastern Suburbs)	Eastern Suburbs Medical Service www.esms.com.au
Perth	Australian Locum Medical Service WA www.medicaustr.com.au
Adelaide	GP Solutions www.gpsolutions.com.au
Brisbane	Family Care Medical Services (Brisbane, Ipswich and Sunshine Coast) www.familycare.com.au
Canberra	Canberra After Hours Locum Medical Service www.calms.net.au
Newcastle	Newcastle After Hours Medical Service www.nahms.com.au
Wollongong	Wollongong Medical Service Co-Operative www.radiodoctor.com.au

What is a Medical Deputising Service?

A Medical Deputising Service provides doctors to visit patients in their homes after-hours to provide diagnosis and treatment. A Medical Deputising Service may also provide clinic and telephone triage/medical advice services.

A day-time general practice engages a Medical Deputising Service to provide care for their patients outside 8am-6pm on weekdays and from noon on Saturday until 8.00AM Monday and all day on public holidays. The after hours period represents 70% of the week.

How does it work?

Where a general practice has engaged the services of a Medical Deputising Service, the practice diverts their phones to the service once the practice closes. The Medical Deputising Service has trained call centre staff, to ensure the appropriate management of urgent cases. This ensures that medical situations that warrant emergency hospital care are properly transferred to the ambulance or to hospital emergency departments.

Where a patient calls the service, a doctor is dispatched to visit the patient at home. The doctor normally arrives within 3 hours.

The next working day, the after-hours doctor sends a report of the consultation back to the patient's GP, which includes any diagnoses and treatments recommended, details of medications and prescriptions provided as well as any investigations ordered, to make sure that there is continuity of care.

Where the doctor decides the patient is in an emergency situation and should be treated in hospital, the after hours doctor will contact ambulance and liaise directly with hospital staff.

Can I contact one of these services directly?

Yes, however generally you must be the patient of a General Practice that engages a Medical Deputising Service.

How much does it cost?

Home visits provided by Medical Deputising Service Doctors attract Medicare rebates. Patients should contact their General Practitioners Medical Deputising Service to obtain informed consent regarding costs.

So, who visits the home, a doctor or a nurse?

NAMDS members provide a doctor for all home visits. All doctors are registered and meet the same educational and qualification requirements as a regular GP.

Does Australia have good after hours doctors home visiting services?

Yes, the Commonwealth Government has invested heavily over the past two decades in ensuring Australians can access medical care at home, 24/7.

Okay, this is a Phase 1 Alert. What constitutes Phase 2 or Phase 3?

Phase 2 will commence if the Commonwealth Minister for Health and Ageing announces a Swine flu pandemic in Australia.

Under Phase 2, Patient reports of suspected cases of Swine flu infection will be followed up by personal contact with the regular GP, and Swine flu patient care planning guidelines will be agreed with the Government and forwarded to, or left with suspected (infected) patients at the time of attendance.

In Phase 2 all NAMDS members will need to obtain sufficient supplies of medications, gloves, masks, swabs and related protective equipment from Government supplies.

Negotiations have commenced between the Commonwealth Government and NAMDS to see if all after-hours doctors can be issued with complimentary supplies of Tamiflu to aid patients who are reasonably suspected of having Swine flu and who have elected to self manage in home isolation.

When will you activate Phase 3?

This phase would only be considered if the present H1N1 virus was to mutate and the Australian mortality rate from the disease dramatically increase.