

Healthdirect : Digital and Virtual health services

Dr. Yuanee Wickramasinghe

Dr. Darran Foo

Medical Directors - Digital Services and GP Helpline



We would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land we are on today, the Gadigal and Bidjigal peoples and acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the many lands from which others join today.

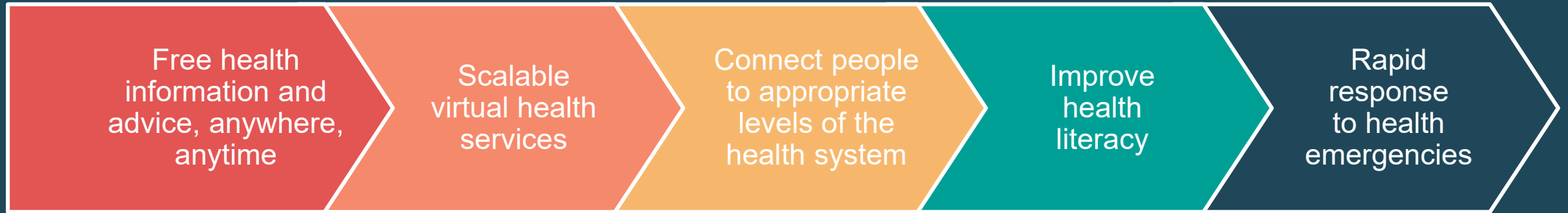
We would also like to pay our respects to Elders past and present and extend that respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are present today.

Agenda

- About Healthdirect
- The Symptom Checker as an AI powered tool
- The Healthdirect Helpline and GP Helpline

Healthdirect Australia

Established by Australian governments to improve access to healthcare



Healthdirect Australia is owned by all Australian governments who are equal shareholders of the company



healthdirect's role in care

Trustworthy advice and connection to the right care 24/7.

We provide trustworthy, free advice and tools so that Australians are connected to appropriate care 24/7. We:

Help them to care
for themselves and
their families.

Help them find and
connect with a service
that meets their needs.

Provide virtual care
when other options aren't
accessible or available.

THE BENEFIT



The right care to meet consumers' needs.



An effective and sustainable health system.

Overview of Healthdirect services

Established by Australian governments to improve access to healthcare

healthdirect

Services include
nurse helpline, website,
symptom checker, service
finder, mobile app and
medicines search



Virtual GP

GP helpline and video call support for people living in areas where local GP availability is limited providing e-scripts and a safety net service



Video Call

Purpose built software for primary care consultations. Used by Healthdirect services, hospitals, community health and other agencies



National Health Services Directory

Virtual directory of health services and practitioners for consumers, providers and policy planners



Pregnancy birth and baby

helpline & digital staffed by maternal and child health nurses, dedicated website and social media outreach



My Aged Care

Inbound call service for consumers and providers and bespoke outbound call services where required.



Ambulance secondary triage

Callers referred from NSW and WA Ambulance are and triaged by healthdirect nurses, reliving pressure on ambulance call outs



Medicare Mental Health

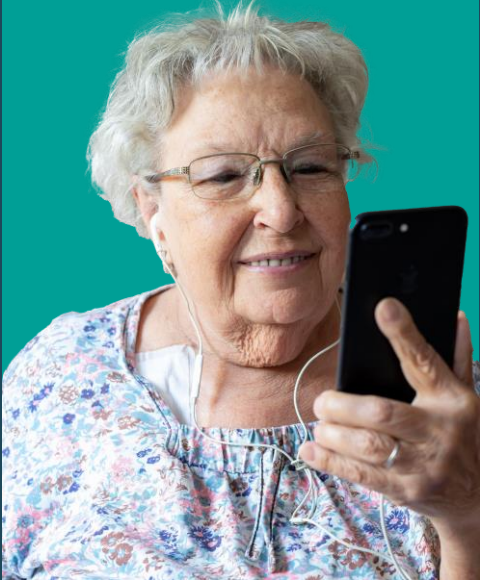
Connecting consumers to care appropriate to their mental health needs



Our virtual services support Australians and their families find and connect with a health service that meets their need in the right place and at the right time. Health professionals also use our services to support their patients. In FY25, our services continued to help those who were not sure what to do next in their journey towards better health.



62 million
interactions with the community across all services





93%
consumer satisfaction across the services we manage



15:1
digital interactions : calls



61%
Healthdirect callers who intended to go to ED were safely diverted to lower-level care options



52 million
website visits





4.1 million
calls to all helplines





4.1%
callers across all helplines identify as First Nations people



10 million
searches per year of the healthdirect Service Finder



2.4 million
accessed the healthdirect Symptom Checker

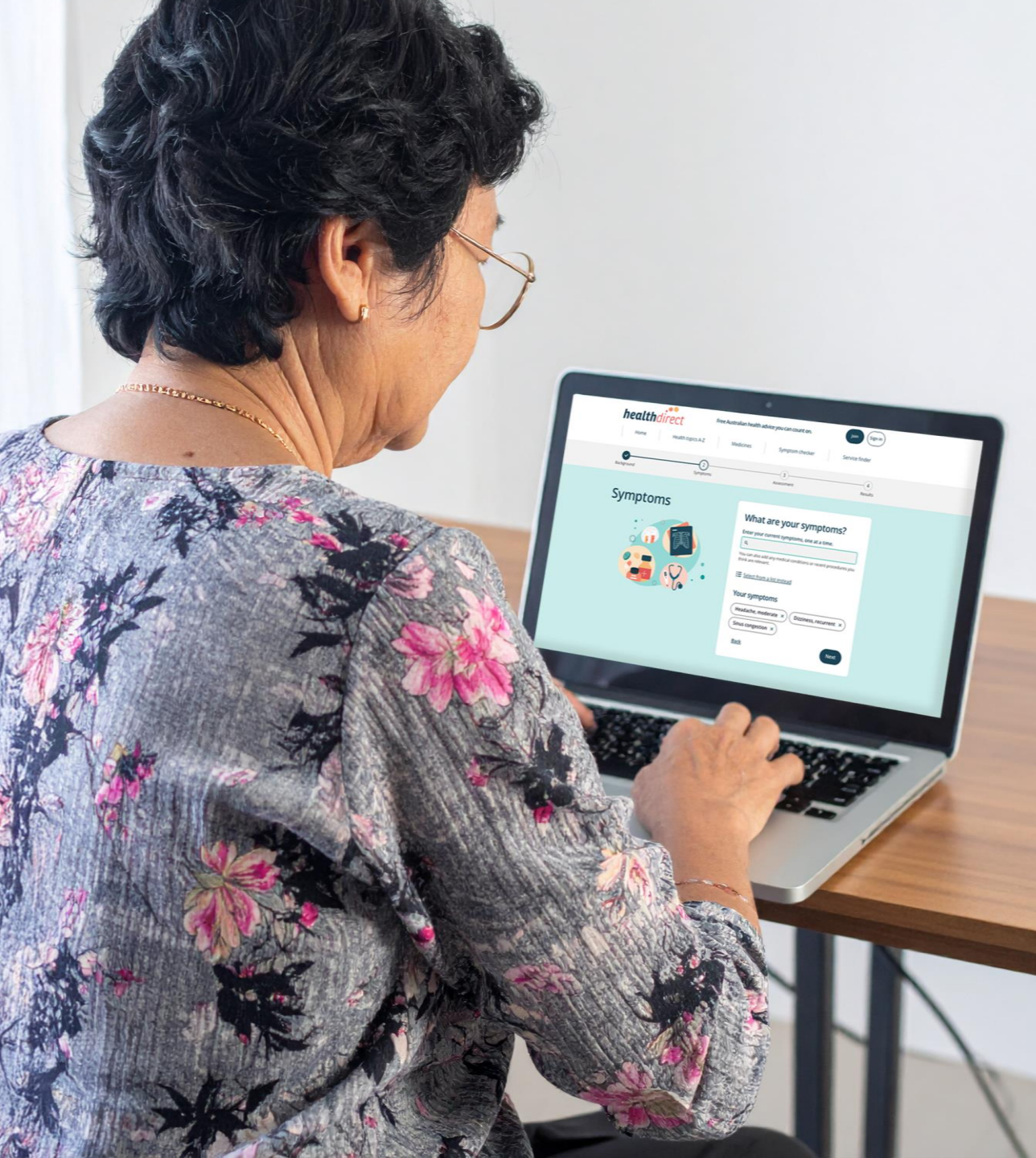
The healthdirect helpline helps consumers where and when healthcare is harder to access.



29%
rural and remote calls

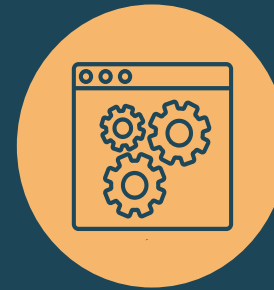


66%
after hours calls



The Symptom Checker

- Launched in 2014
- Updated in 2023 following Healthdirect's implementation of a new AI powered triage tool for the helpline
- The new tool supports:



Multi-symptom
input



Entry of lifestyle
and risk factors



Probabilistic
modelling
comparing
thousands of
symptoms

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Origin is considered as part of clinical assessment

Association with relevant conditions:

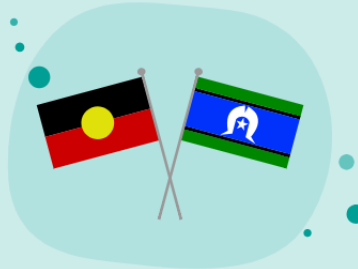
Acute hepatitis C	Gonorrhea
Acute otitis media	Hypertension
Acute rheumatic fever	Myocardial infarction
Asthma	Peripheral vascular disease
Cataract	Primary syphilis
Chlamydial genitourinary infection	Secondary syphilis
Chronic kidney disease	Tertiary syphilis
Dental caries	
Diabetes mellitus type 2	
Trachoma	
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease	

healthdirect Free Australian health advice you can count on. [Join](#) [Sign in](#)

[Home](#) [Health topics A-Z](#) [Medicines](#) [Symptom checker](#) [Service finder](#)

1 Background 2 Symptoms 3 Assessment 4 Results

Background



Are you of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?

(Optional)

[Why am I being asked this?](#)

[Back](#) [Next](#)

24 hour health advice you can count on

📞 1800 022 222

Safety, design and usability considerations



1. **Clinical Safety Assessment**
2. **Plain English Language (PEL) Assessment**
3. **Usability testing with consumers**

1



Internal clinical safety assessment concluded algorithm performance of the Healthdirect Symptom Checker is safe for consumer use – **87% clinical vignettes correctly triaged**

2



PEL testing of 8 scenarios and 6 indicators (accuracy, appropriateness for Australia, clarity, conciseness, inclusiveness, and format) led to clearer, simpler language ahead of launch

3



Expert review and two usability testing rounds showed consumers were comfortable with navigation and questions. Usability improved notably between rounds, with First Nations participants included.

Facilitating access to alternative care pathways

July 2024 Establishing a digital front door for QLD



Consumers who are advised to attend ED, see a doctor in 2 hours or 24 hours and who meet eligibility for QLD's Virtual Emergency Care Service (QVECS) are recommended this service.

Jan-Jun 2025



48 000 users
presented with
QVECS as
option



Clinically
appropriate
referrals



**0 clinical
incidents**
to date

September 2024 Access to Urgent Care Centres (UCCs)



Consumers who are advised to attend ED, see a doctor in 2 hours or 24 hours and who meet eligibility criteria based on specific conditions are recommended UCC as an alternative care pathway.

Jan-Jun 2025



200,000 users
presented with
UCC as an option



**0 clinical
incidents**
to date

A safe and accessible tool

Data from 1 Jan to 30 Jun 2025



896k

Sessions started



72%

Completion rate



4:11

Session duration

Disposition data



000

6%



ED

23%



GP or other health professional

52%



Self care

13%



Call Healthdirect

6%



0

Critical incidents



5%

Aboriginal and/or
Torres Strait Islander



Geographical location

69%

Metropolitan
areas

31%

Regional, Rural and
Remote areas
(MM2 – MM7)

Understanding the Healthdirect Helpline & GP Helpline

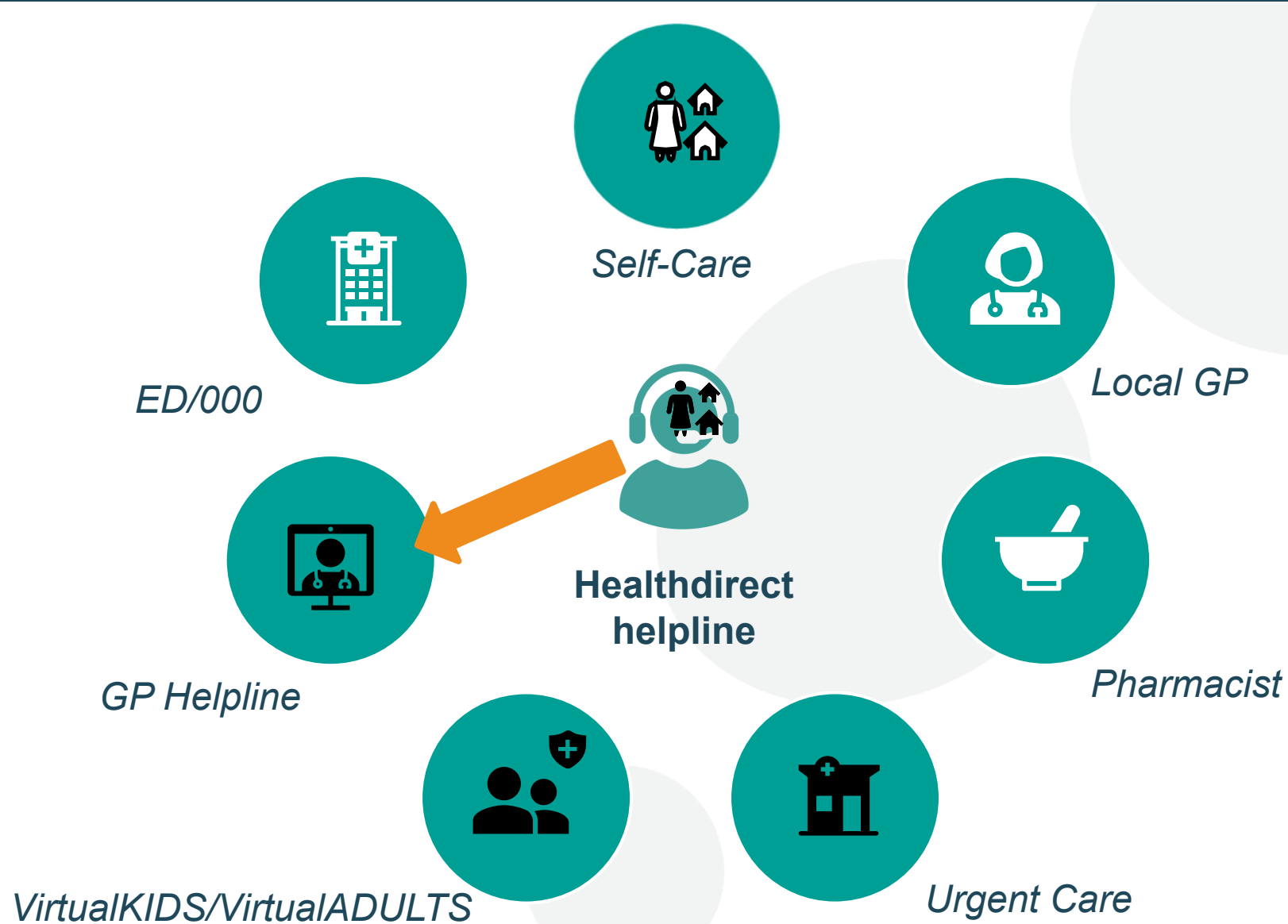
The NSW Single Front Door

Helping people access the right care, when and where they need it: from urgent needs to after-hours support

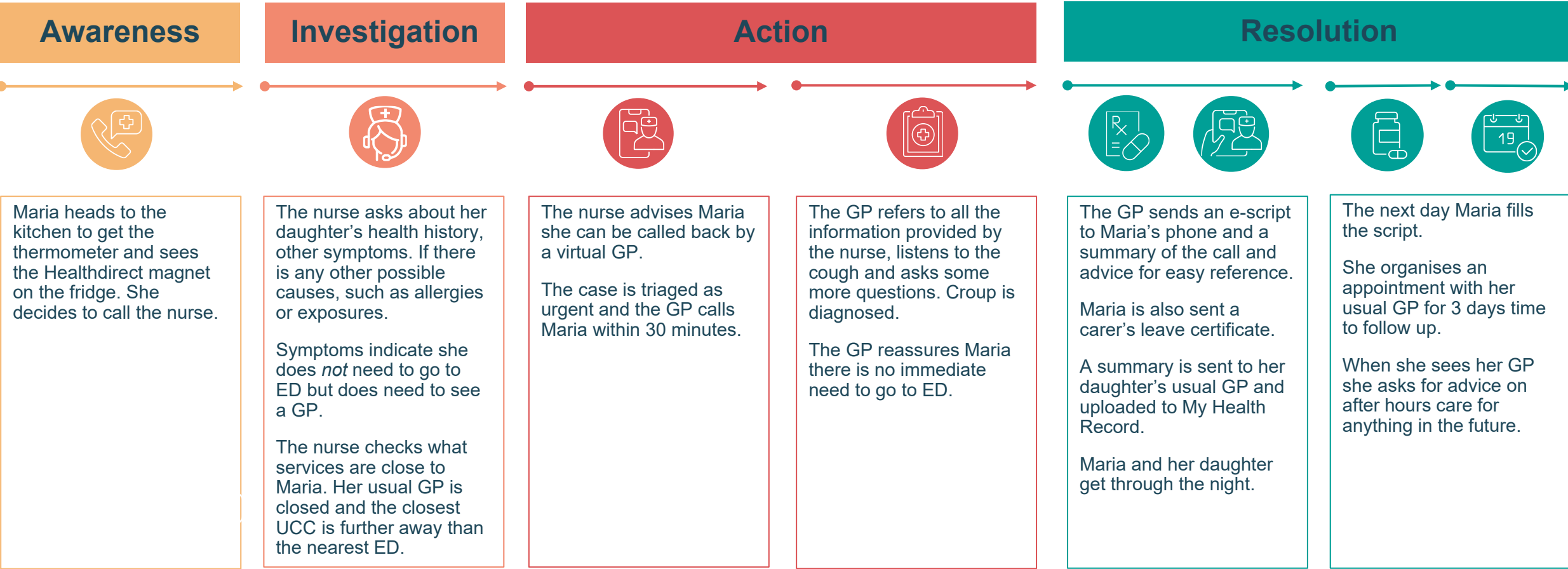


- ‘One door’ or ‘one entry’ point (with a no wrong door principle)
- Connects consumers to the right care via virtual and physical pathways, including:
 - Self-care
 - General practice (your local GP)
 - Urgent care clinics
 - Virtual GP (if your GP is unavailable within the timeframe)
 - VirtualKIDS (specialist paediatric urgent care)
 - VirtualADULTS (emergency doctors and nurses)
 - ED and 000

Connecting consumers to care: Post-triage pathways



Maria is a 32-year-old single mother. Her 2-year-old daughter went to bed with a snuffle and has woken up at 2am with a phlegmy cough and clammy skin. Maria is worried and unsure if she should head straight to ED.



System and service interaction



Healthdirect GP Helpline - provides peace of mind for parents who can stay home at night with their sick children



8,000

Consultations provided per month



66%

Women and mothers of young children



88%

Customer satisfaction



75%

ED/000 Intent Diversion



Rural
40%



Metro
60%

GP calls

*CY 2024 National data

Navigating care: The Healthdirect helpline

What it is: Registered nurses provide information and advice to help people get the right level of care, 24/7.

Why it helps: Saves time, improves safety and peace of mind, and connects people to appropriate services.

What happens when you call

1. You're worried
2. The nurse asks questions, listens and assesses
3. They provide advice and connect you to the right care



Supporting safe, efficient care

- Evidence-based triage with clinical judgement
- High-coverage: 24/7 model with most calls in the after-hours
- Operational benefit: safely diverts people to lower-acuity care

GP Helpline: Supporting timely, connected care

What it is: If nurse triage recommends seeing a GP and your usual GP isn't available in time, you can access a phone or video consultation with a GP

Why it helps: Ensures timely access to clinical advice, prescriptions, and medical certificates

What happens

1. If eligible after triage, you'll be offered a GP callback
2. You confirm your details and consent to share a summary
3. GP reviews notes, discusses your concerns, and plans next step
4. You may receive an eScript, and with consent, summaries go to your GP and My Health Record

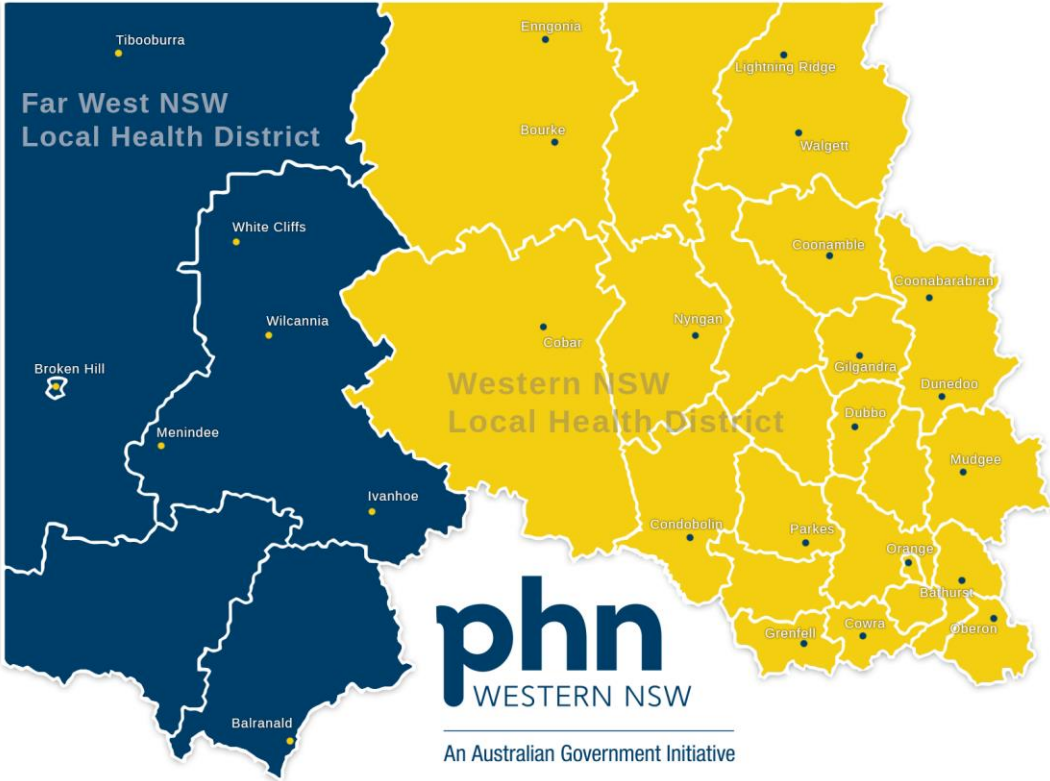
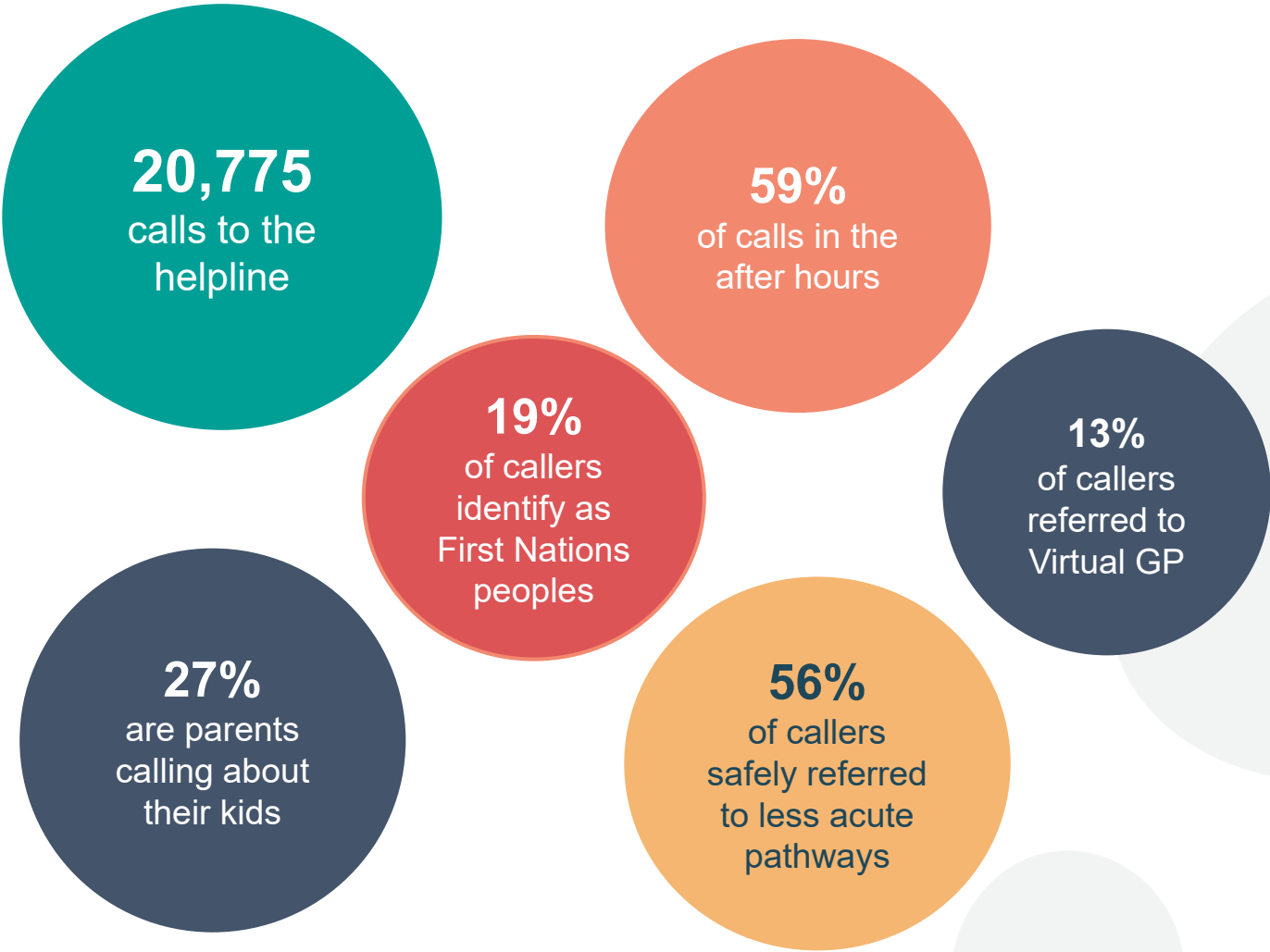


Supporting access & continuity

- Timely access to care when local options unavailable
- Supports appropriate care outside the ED
- Continuity of care: summaries shared to GPs and My Health Record
- Safe, efficient care delivered virtually

Use of Healthdirect's services

Western NSW PHN Local service use: FY24/25 at a glance



Murrumbidgee PHN Local service use: FY24/25 at a glance

12,441
calls to the
helpline

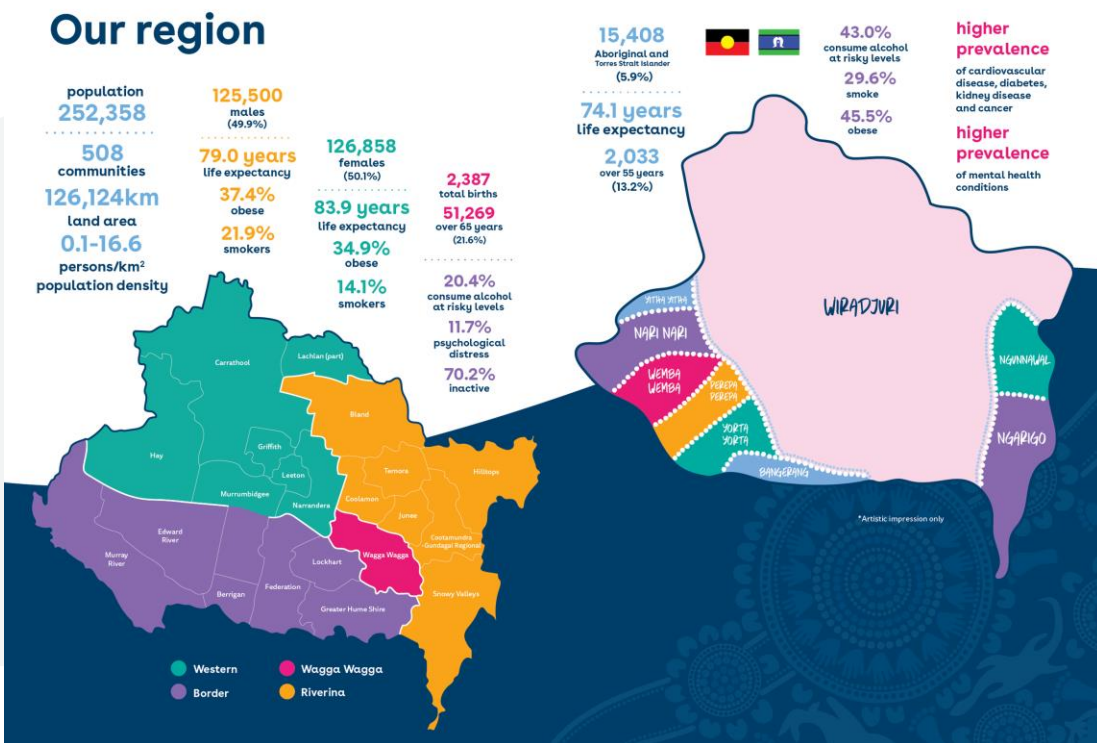
65%
of calls in the
after hours

12%
of callers
identify as
First Nations
peoples

30%
are parents
calling about
their kids

59%
of callers
safely referred
to less acute
pathways

13%
of callers
referred to
Virtual GP



HNE PHN Local service use: FY24/25 at a glance

99,514

calls to the
helpline

60%

of calls in the
after hours

12%

of callers
identify as
First Nations
peoples

10%

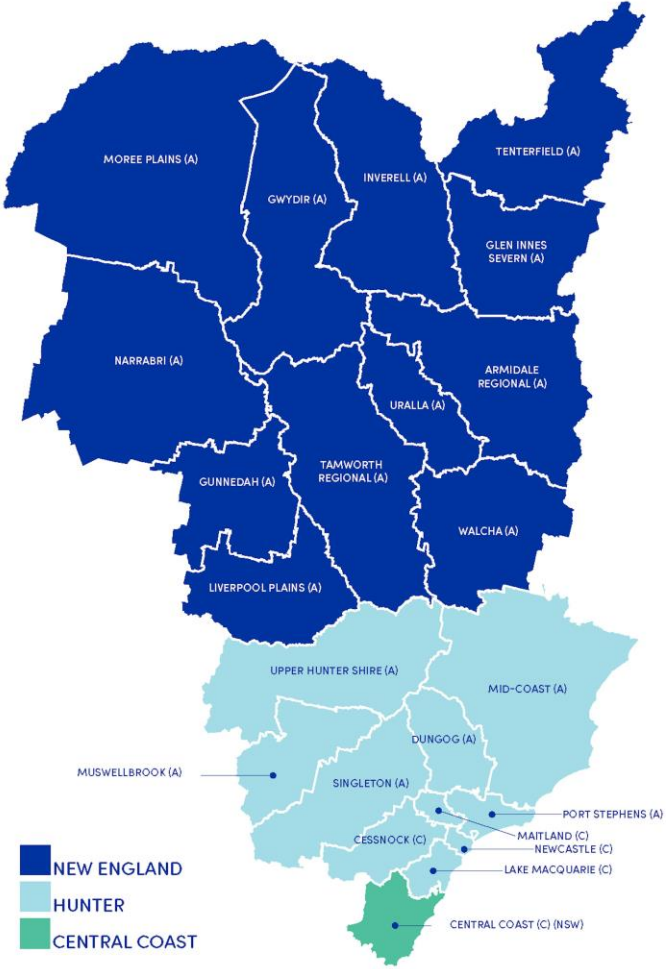
of callers
referred to
Virtual GP

28%

are parents
calling about
their kids

54%

of callers
safely referred
to less acute
pathways



North Coast PHN Local service use: FY24/25 at a glance

33,151
calls to the
helpline

57%
of calls in the
after hours

10%
of callers
identify as
First Nations
peoples

16%
of callers
referred to
Virtual GP

19%
are parents
calling about
their kids

53%
of callers
safely referred
to less acute
pathways



South Eastern NSW PHN Local service use: FY24/25 at a glance

41,498

calls to the
helpline

57%

of calls in the
after hours

10%

of callers
identify as
First Nations
peoples

11%

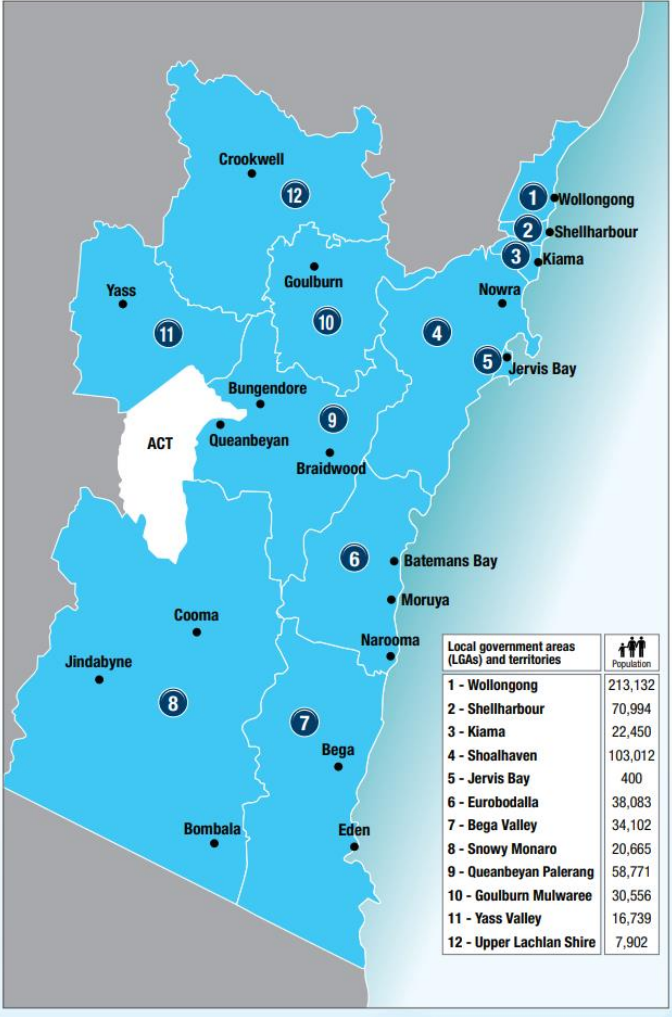
of callers
referred to
Virtual GP

21%

are parents
calling about
their kids

57%

of callers
safely referred
to less acute
pathways



We are improving our service for First Nations users



**Culturally safe
services**

Digital channels

**Consumer
needs
and
engagement**

Where you can find more information www.healthdirect.gov.au

For services:
Free brochures,
posters, magnets
are available

Visit
'About us'
on our
website

Check your symptoms online
anywhere, anytime

Next time you're sick or injured, use the **healthdirect Symptom Checker** to know what care you need.



- Self-care
- Pharmacy
- GP
- Urgent care
- Virtual care
- Emergency

Scan the QR code or visit:
healthdirect.gov.au

healthdirect

healthdirect
Anywhere, anytime



healthdirect

Know your options 24/7
• Nights • Weekends • Public holidays

healthdirect Symptom Checker
Check your symptoms online and get instant advice on the right care for you.
Visit healthdirect.gov.au

healthdirect helpline
Talk to a registered nurse for health advice, with connection to the care you need.
Call 1800 022 222

Know your options 24/7
healthdirect connects you to the right care

healthdirect symptom checker
healthdirect.gov.au

healthdirect helpline
1800 022 222 **healthdirect**

healthdirect

Free health advice.
Anywhere.
Anytime.
For anyone.



Feeling unwell? Need health advice for you or your mob?
Call the healthdirect helpline or use the online Symptom Checker

24 hours a day, 7 days a week

healthdirect

Follow us
across our
socials – and
share!

Instagram



Not sure if you need to see your GP?

Facebook

Wet Cough VS. Dry Cough

- Coughing up mucus
- Wheezing when you breathe in
- A "wet" sound from mucus in your airways
- Sore chest
- Worse in the morning

- No mucus
- Tickly feeling in the chest
- Stubborn, persistent coughing
- Usually worse during the night



healthdirect

TikTok

What's new with RATs?



WELL RATS NOWADAYS

Join our
Consumer
Engagement
Group

Help shape the
health services
Australians use



Scan to
join

Q & A

Thank you

Trusted Health Advice | [healthdirect](https://www.healthdirect.gov.au)