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## **PRESS RELEASE 26<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

### **MCFD issues a free self-care guide to Colds, Flu and Covid-19 for the general public**

Family doctors continue to be available in the current circumstances to preserve the physical, social and psychological wellbeing of all citizens. All the other medical conditions, over and above the current numbers of SARS-CoV-2 infections, continue to affect the health of those involved and their families.

As Malta moves towards the winter months Family Doctors/General Practitioners are seeing more patients attending their private clinics and Health Centres. An increasing number of people have health concerns related to the seasonal surge of respiratory tract infections expected as the temperature cools. Many individuals have health concerns which were postponed during the past months and there is a noticeable rise in symptoms related to both the stress and the lack of exercise that the past months forced upon many of us.

It is therefore very important, especially now, that patients learn to recognise mild viral illnesses, and are equipped with the knowledge and the confidence to 'self-care' for mild illnesses, or those of their loved ones. The Malta College of Family Doctors (MCFD) has therefore published a 'Self-Care' guide for the general public. Self-care means treating mild illnesses at home, using rest, nutrition, and sometimes over-the-counter medicines. Self-care helps avoid the spread of infections in crowded waiting rooms, minimises unnecessary use of medications, and helps reduce the burden on health care services. In the current and anticipated scenario with the number of cases of COVID-19 cases, which are expected to rise, it is imperative that health care services are protected to allow the focus on those more in need.

The document explains the symptoms of mild viral illnesses, and why they occur. It outlines the basics of treatment, as well as what commonly-used medicines are safe to use as needed. It also includes a list of 'red flag' symptoms to look out for, and who to speak to if they occur. The document is available in both Maltese and English, and the public and healthcare personnel are encouraged to use and share it.

The MCFD firmly believes in patient education, and hopes that this document will help answer many questions that family doctors/general practitioners are often asked. It is intended as a reference, helping patients take better control of their own health. We also call upon employers to assist with all the above, by not demanding doctor certification for mild illnesses of up to two days.

If we all learn to rest as necessary and control our mild viral infections at home, we will hopefully reduce the frequency of complications from, and control the spread of, infectious illness. This will help us protect the vulnerable in our society and maintain the health care system going. Finally, the MCFD encourages take-up of the influenza vaccine, and subsequently when it becomes available, the COVID-19 vaccine.

The documents can be viewed and downloaded at the links: <https://mcfcd.org.mt/generalpublic/selfcare>

Footnotes:

The Malta College of Family Doctors (MCFD) is a Voluntary Organisation (VO/0973) that strives to improve the academic and clinical performance of family doctors (known as “it-tobba tal-familja” or “general practitioners”) and the standards of primary health care in our country. [www.mcfcd.org.mt](http://www.mcfcd.org.mt)