# Information for aeromedical retrieval of patients with COVID-19

COVID-19 is caused by the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2.

* SARS-CoV-2 is usually transmitted by people with symptoms of COVID-19, which include fever, a cough, sore throat, tiredness and shortness of breath.
* There is limited evidence that COVID-19 occasionally spreads from an infected person without symptoms.

SARS-CoV-2 is usually spread from person-to-person through:

* direct close contact with a person while they are infectious
* close contact with a person with a confirmed infection who coughs or sneezes, or
* touching objects or surfaces (such as door handles or tables) contaminated from a cough or sneeze from a person with a confirmed infection, and then touching your mouth or face.

Uncommonly, SARS-CoV-2 can spread via airborne particles, e.g. during performance of an aerosol-generating procedure, such as passage of an endotracheal tube or bronchoscopy. These procedures are required only for very sick patients with COVID-19 pneumonia.

People at risk of COVID-19 are:

* those who have travelled, in the past 14 days, within or through a country/region where there is local transmission of COVID-19.
* those who have had contact with a person with COVID-19 in the past 14 days.

## Precautions for aeromedical crew and staff accompanying a patient with COVID-19

* place a surgical mask on the patient (if tolerated)
* each crew member should be issued with a personal bottle of alcohol-based hand rub
* on ground:
  + as a minimum: wear a surgical mask, long-sleeved fluid-resistant disposable gown, disposable gloves and eye protection (goggles or face shield).
  + for patients who have severe respiratory symptoms requiring airway management or aerosol generating procedures: staff in close contact with the patient should wear a P2/N95 respirator, fit-checked, and other PPE as above.
  + Note that, if the patient is intubated, with closed circuit ventilation, the risk of aerosol transmission, is negligible and the P2/N95 respirator can be exchanged for a more comfortable surgical mask.
* In air:
  + retrieval staff who remain in close contact with the patient should continue to wear PPE as above (see note re use of P2/N95 respirator vs surgical mask above);
  + Rotary wing: The cockpit should be isolated through use of the aircraft blind. Once pilots are in the cockpit masks and other PPE can be removed.
  + Air conditioning (if applicable) should be selected in non-recirculating mode.
  + Fixed-wing pressurised aircraft: If available aircraft recirculation should be deselected.
  + If cabin air recirculation is selected, then HEPA filtration is preferred. Aircraft ventilation should remain on at all times during transport of respiratory patients, including during ground delays.

## Tips for putting on, using and removing PPE

Put PPE on in the following order:

* Long sleeved fluid resistant, disposable gown
* Surgical mask or P2/N95 respirator (perform a fit check)
* Eye protection (goggles or a face shield)
* Gloves which should be pulled over the cuffs of the gown.

While using PPE:

* change gloves if they become torn or heavily contaminated; perform hand hygiene after removing damaged gloves
* change gown if it becomes soiled; perform hand hygiene after removing soiled gown

Take PPE off in the following order:

* Remove gloves and gown being careful to avoid contaminating clothing
* Perform hand hygiene
* Remove the goggles/face shield
* Perform hand hygiene
* Remove the surgical mask or P2/N95 respirator being careful not to touch the front of the mask/ respirator
* Perform hand hygiene

Hand hygiene may be performed using either soap and water of alcohol-based hand rub.

## Aircraft and equipment cleaning

Procedures already in place for aircraft and equipment cleaning following transport of a patient with an infectious illness such as influenza are sufficient.

## More information

For the latest advice, information and resources, go to [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)

Call the National Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you require translating or interpreting services, call 131 450.

The phone number of your state or territory public health agency is available at [www.health.gov.au/state-territory-contacts](https://www.health.gov.au/about-us/contact-us/local-state-and-territory-health-departments)

If you have concerns about your health, speak to your doctor.