Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Australian national notifiable diseases case definition

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This document contains the surveillance case definition for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) which is nationally notifiable within Australia. State and territory health departments use this definition to decide whether to notify the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care of a case.

**Due to the large number of revisions made to the** **COVID-19 surveillance case definition over time, the version history table is provided at the end of this document.**

# Reporting

Confirmed cases should be notified.

# Confirmed case

A confirmed case requires laboratory definitive evidence only.

# Laboratory definitive evidence

1. Detection of SARS-CoV-2 by nucleic acid amplification testing (NAAT)

OR

1. Isolation of SARS-CoV-2 in cell culture, with confirmation using a NAAT

# Version history

The COVID-19 surveillance case definition was embedded in the [Coronavirus (COVID-19) – CDNA National Guidelines for Public Health Units](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-cdna-national-guidelines-for-public-health-units) from 23 January 2020 to 12 June 2024. Version numbers in the version history table below reflect updates to the national guidelines. Not all updates to the national guidelines included a change to the surveillance case definition. For this reason, version numbers in the table below may appear incomplete.

| Version | Status | Last reviewed | Implementation date |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 7.0 | Confirmed Case:  Removed antibody detection from laboratory definitive evidence.  Probable Case:  Removed probable case definition. | 13 May 2024 | 1 July 2024 |
| 6.4 | Probable Case:  Addition of a probable case definition that includes individuals who have laboratory suggestive evidence.  Laboratory suggestive evidence  Added ‘detection of SARS-CoV-2 by rapid antigen testing (RAT).  Historical Case:  Removal of historical case definition | 14 January 2022 | 14 January 2022 |
| 6.0 | Suspect Case:  Removal of suspect case definition | 8 November 2021 | 8 November 2021 |
| 5.0 | Historical Case:  Addition of ‘headache’ to clinical evidence  Suspect Case:  Addition of ‘headache’ to clinical evidence | 6 October 2021 | 6 October 2021 |
| 4.7 | Confirmed Case:  Intention of confirmed case definition added.  Historical Case:  Intention of historical case definition added.  Laboratory evidence of historic infection  Added new criteria based off vaccination status.  Suspect Case:  Intention of suspect case definition added.  Clinical and epidemiological evidence ‘(in the past 14 days)’ outlined. | 24 June 2021 | 24 June 2021 |
| 4.4 | Historical Case:  Laboratory suggestive evidence  Point 1 removed of ‘with high Ct values’ and added ‘with results suggestive of a historical infection’ with an explanation outlined in footnote 3.  Point 3 removed reference to high PCR Ct result and changed to ‘detection of SARS-CoV-2 by PCR with initial test results suggestive of a historical infection AND a subsequent PCR is negative, taken at least 24 hours apart’. | 11 May 2021 | 11 May 2021 |
| 4.3 | Confirmed Case:  Added rational for the current confirmed case definition.  Added ‘a historical case should not have symptoms of COVID-19 (or not ha  Laboratory definitive evidence  Point 3 removed ‘significant increase’ and added ‘four-fold increase in SARS-CoV-2 antibodies of any immunoglobulin subclass including ‘total’ assays in acute and convalescent sera, in the absence of vaccination’.  Historical Case:  Added a historical case requires ‘previous (prior to the past 14 days)’ for clinical or epidemiological evidence.  Laboratory suggestive evidence  Addition of 3 points providing a list of appropriate laboratory results to indicate a historical case.  Clinical evidence:  Addition of loss of smell or loss of taste  Epidemiological evidence  Removal of contact with a historical case.  Removal or domestic travel ad addition of ‘people who have been in a setting where there is a COVID-19 case’ and ‘people who have been in areas with recent local transmission of SARS-CoV-2’. | 3 March 2021 | 3 March 2021 |
| 4.2 | Confirmed Case:  Laboratory definitive evidence  Point 3 added ‘SARS-CoV-2 IgG seroconversion or a significant increase in SARS-CoV-2 neutralising or IgG antibody level (e.g., four-fold or greater rise in titre’.  Added footnote 1 advising of possibility for false negative PCR results in children.  Added footnote 2 ‘For all serological responses to be counted as laboratory evidence, a person should not have had a recent history of COVID-19 vaccination’. | 29 January 2021 | 29 January 2021 |
| 4.0 | Confirmed Case:  Removed point 3 ‘undergoes a seroconversion to or has a significant rise in SARS-CoV-2 neutralising or IgG antibody level (e.g., four-fold or greater rise in titre)’.  Probable Case:  Section removed.  Historical Case:  Section added.  Reporting:  Added ‘both confirmed cases and historical cases should be notified and reported’. | 23 December 2020 | 23 December 2020 |
| 3.11 | Suspect Case:  Clinical Criteria  Footnote 4 ‘acute blocked nose (congestion)’ added to COVID-19 symptom list. | 10 December 2020 | 10 December 2020 |
| 3.6 | Added isolation advice stating, ‘Any person with symptoms clinically compatible with COVID-19 who is tested should stay at home until a negative test is returned or symptoms have resolved, whichever is longer’.  Added testing requirements for individuals in hotel quarantine. | 30 July 2020 | 30 July 2020 |
| 3.4 | Suspect Case:  Removed Interstate travel from epidemiological criteria. | 1 July 2020 | 1 July 2020 |
| 3.3 | Enhanced Tested:  Added loss of smell or loss of taste to requirements for when to test beyond the suspect case definition.  Added note on clinical judgement when considering retesting. | 22 June 2020 | 22 June 2020 |
| 3.2 | Suspect Case:  Clinical Criteria  Added ‘loss of smell or loss of taste’. | 12 June 2020 | 12 June 2020 |
| 3.0 | Probable Case:  Removed ‘is a close contact of a confirmed or probable case of COIVD-19’ and replaced with ‘meets one or more of the epidemiological criteria outlined in the suspect case definition’.  Enhanced Testing:  Added requirements for when testing should be undertaken beyond the suspect case definition. | 28 May 2020 | 28 May 2020 |
| 2.11 | Amended classification of fever to ≥37.5°C.  Enhanced Testing:  Added that jurisdictions may test asymptomatic persons who are quarantined due to international or interstate travel.  Provided link to appropriate specimen collection guidelines. | 21 May 2020 | 21 May 2020 |
| 2.10 | Confirmed Case:  Criteria separated into three points to recognise different laboratory testing methods.  Probable Case:  Point 2 added to add ‘detection of SARS-CoV2-neutralising or IgG antibody AND has had a compatible clinical illness AND is a close contact of a confirmed or probable case of COIVD-19.  Suspect Case:  Footnote 1 added stating ‘antibody detection must be by a valid assay and included in an external quality assurance program.  Footnote 3 added stating ‘if the person is a close contact of a probable case, at least one person in the chain of transmission must be a confirmed case’. | 13 May 2020 | 13 May 2020 |
| 2.9 | Suspect Case:  Footnote 2 added outlining other reported symptoms of COIVD-19.  Enhanced Testing:  Footnote 2 added outlining other reported symptoms of COIVD-19. | 5 May 2020 | 5 May 2020 |
| 2.8 | Enhanced Testing:  Added points regarding isolation if symptoms resolve prior to test result returned and isolation requirements if a positive PCR test result is returned. | 1 May 2020 | 1 May 2020 |
| 2.7 | Added a caveat stating how the case definition has been developed, noting its ongoing review.  Suspect Case:  Removed the table presentation and revised to present summarised information.  Enhanced Testing:  Section added. | 24 April 2020 | 24 April 2020 |
| 2.5 | Probable Case:  Reclassified probable cases as ‘a person, who has not been tested’.  Suspect Case:  Added more descriptors to categories outlined in high-risk settings.  Added footnote 3 ‘In certain high risk outbreak settings, public health units may consider testing asymptomatic contacts to inform management of the outbreak’.  Added footnote directing to ‘information on geographically localised areas with elevated risk of community transmission’. | 6 April 2020 | 6 April |
| 2.4 | Probable Case:  Added household contacts of confirmed or probable cases of COIVD-19 to those classified as a probable case. | 26 March 2020 | 26 March 2020 |
| 2.3 | Probable Case:  Added definition of a probable case  Suspect Case:  Presented a table outlining epidemiological criteria, clinical criteria and actions based of level of risk. | 24 March 2020 | 24 March 2020 |
| 2.1 | Suspect Case:  Added a footnote outlining recommended temperature collection techniques.  Clinical Criteria  Updated fever classification to be ≥38°C. | 20 March 2020 | 20 March 2020 |
| 2.0 | Suspect Case:  Added ‘if any healthcare worker with direct patient contact has a fever (≥37.5) AND an acute respiratory infection (e.g., shortness of breath, cough, sore throat), they are classified as a suspect case’.  Epidemiological Criteria  Removed reference to casual contact. | 13 March 2020 | 13 March 2020 |
| 1.18 | Suspect Case:  Added a footnote to define critically ill as ‘requiring care in ICU/HDU, or for patients in which ICU care is not appropriate, respiratory or multiorgan failure. Clinical judgement should be exercised considering the likelihood of COVID-19’.  Epidemiological Criteria  Removed the list summarising risk levels of the country transmission risk assessment, amended to ‘international travel in the 14 days before illness onset’. | 10 March 2020 | 10 March 2020 |
| 1.15 | Suspect Case:  Added ‘if the patient satisfies epidemiology and clinical criteria, they are classified as a suspect case’.  Added ‘if the patient has severe community-acquired pneumonia (critically ill) and no other cause is identified, with or without recent international travel, they are classified as a suspect case.’  Added ‘if the patient has moderate or severe community-acquired pneumonia (hospitalised) and is a healthcare worker, with or without international travel, they are classified as a suspect case’.  Added a list summarising risk level of the country transmission risk assessment. | 3 March 2020 | 3 March 2020 |
| 1.14 | Person under investigation:  Removed section.  Suspect Case:  Epidemiological criteria  Added footnote to present a country transmission risk assessment list, in lieu of the person under investigation section. | 2 March 2020 | 2 March 2020 |
| 1.12 | Person under investigation:  Added Cambodia to the list of countries in which returned travellers should be considered for testing. | 27 February 2020 | 27 February 2020 |
| 1.11 | Person under investigation:  Added Italy to the list of countries in which returned travellers should be considered for testing. | 26 February 2020 | 26 February 2020 |
| 1.10 | Person under investigation:  Added Iran and South Korea to the list of countries in which returned travellers should be considered for testing. | 23 February 2020 | 23 February 2020 |
| 1.9 | Confirmed Case:  Updated to state ‘a validated specific SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid test’.  Person under investigation:  Added caveat for a person to be managed as a suspect case ‘until COVID-19 is confirmed or excluded as the cause of illness. | 21 February 2020 | 21 February 2020 |
| 1.7 | Person under investigation:  Added section. | 15 February 2020 | 15 February 2020 |
| 1.6 | Definitions amended to update references of 2019-nCov to COVID-19. | 14 February 2020 | 14 February 2020 |
| 1.4 | Rationale for the current case definitions:  Added section. |  |  |
| 1.3 | Suspect Case:  Epidemiological Criteria  Amended close contact to include ‘confirmed case’ only.  Clinical Criteria  Separated previous criteria into two points. | 4 February 2020 | 4 February 2020 |
| 1.2 | Suspect Case:  Epidemiological Criteria  Added ‘(including transit through) mainland China’.  Added close contact to include ‘confirmed or suspected case’.  Clinical Criteria  Combined the previous two criteria into a single criterion point. | 2 February 2020 | 2 February 2020 |
| 1.1 | Suspect Case:  Epidemiological Criteria  Amended to ‘Hubei Province, China’ and updated to include ‘agreed areas. | 27 January 2020 | 27 January 2020 |
| 1.0 | Initial CDNA case definition | 23 January 2020 | 23 January 2020 |