



# 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

2. 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](#) 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:<br>Removed antibody detection from laboratory definitive evidence.<br>Probable Case:<br>Removed probable case definition.   | 13 May 2024     | 1 July 2024         |
| 6.4     | Probable Case:<br>Addition of a probable case definition that includes individuals who have laboratory suggestive evidence.<br>Laboratory suggestive evidence<br>Added 'detection of SARS-CoV-2 by rapid antigen testing (RAT).<br>Historical Case:<br>Removal of historical case definition  | 14 January 2022 | 14 January 2022     |
| 6.0     | Suspect Case:<br>Removal of suspect case definition   | 8 November 2021 | 8 November 2021     |
| 5.0     | Historical Case:<br>Addition of 'headache' to clinical evidence<br>Suspect Case:<br>Addition of 'headache' to clinical evidence   | 6 October 2021  | 6 October 2021      |
| 4.7     | Confirmed Case:<br>Intention of confirmed case definition added.<br>Historical Case:<br>Intention of historical case definition added.<br>Laboratory evidence of historic infection<br>Added new criteria based off vaccination status.<br>Suspect Case:<br>Intention of suspect case definition added.<br>Clinical and epidemiological evidence '(in the past 14 days)' outlined.  | 24 June 2021    | 24 June 2021        |
| 4.4     | Historical Case:<br>Laboratory suggestive evidence<br>Point 1 removed of 'with high Ct values' and added 'with results suggestive of a historical infection' with an explanation outlined in footnote 3.<br>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         |

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|---------|---|------------------|---------------------|
| 4.3     | <p>Confirmed Case:</p> <p>Added rational for the current confirmed case definition.</p> <p>Added 'a historical case should not have symptoms of COVID-19 (or not ha</p> <p>Laboratory definitive evidence</p> <p>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'.</p> <p>Historical Case:</p> <p>Added a historical case requires 'previous (prior to the past 14 days)' for clinical or epidemiological evidence.</p> <p>Laboratory suggestive evidence</p> <p>Addition of 3 points providing a list of appropriate laboratory results to indicate a historical case.</p> <p>Clinical evidence:</p> <p>Addition of loss of smell or loss of taste</p> <p>Epidemiological evidence</p> <p>Removal of contact with a historical case.</p> <p>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'.</p> | 3 March 2021     | 3 March 2021        |
| 4.2     | <p>Confirmed Case:</p> <p>Laboratory definitive evidence</p> <p>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'.</p> <p>Added footnote 1 advising of possibility for false negative PCR results in children.</p> <p>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'.</p>  | 29 January 2021  | 29 January 2021     |
| 4.0     | <p>Confirmed Case:</p> <p>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)'.</p> <p>Probable Case:</p> <p>Section removed.</p>  | 23 December 2020 | 23 December 2020    |

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|---------|--|------------------|---------------------|
|         | Historical Case:<br>Section added.<br>Reporting:<br>Added 'both confirmed cases and historical cases should be notified and reported'.   |                  |                     |
| 3.11    | Suspect Case:<br>Clinical Criteria<br>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'.<br>Added testing requirements for individuals in hotel quarantine.  | 30 July 2020     | 30 July 2020        |
| 3.4     | Suspect Case:<br>Removed Interstate travel from epidemiological criteria.  | 1 July 2020      | 1 July 2020         |
| 3.3     | Enhanced Tested:<br>Added loss of smell or loss of taste to requirements for when to test beyond the suspect case definition.<br>Added note on clinical judgement when considering retesting.  | 22 June 2020     | 22 June 2020        |
| 3.2     | Suspect Case:<br>Clinical Criteria<br>Added 'loss of smell or loss of taste'.  | 12 June 2020     | 12 June 2020        |
| 3.0     | Probable Case:<br>Removed 'is a close contact of a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19' and replaced with 'meets one or more of the epidemiological criteria outlined in the suspect case definition'.<br>Enhanced Testing:<br>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 $\geq 37.5^{\circ}\text{C}$ .<br>Enhanced Testing:<br>Added that jurisdictions may test asymptomatic persons who are quarantined due to international or interstate travel.   | 21 May 2020      | 21 May 2020         |

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|         | Provided link to appropriate specimen collection guidelines.  |               |                     |
| 2.10    | <p>Confirmed Case:</p> <p>Criteria separated into three points to recognise different laboratory testing methods.</p> <p>Probable Case:</p> <p>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 COVID-19.</p> <p>Suspect Case:</p> <p>Footnote 1 added stating 'antibody detection must be by a valid assay and included in an external quality assurance program.</p> <p>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'.</p> | 13 May 2020   | 13 May 2020         |
| 2.9     | <p>Suspect Case:</p> <p>Footnote 2 added outlining other reported symptoms of COVID-19.</p> <p>Enhanced Testing:</p> <p>Footnote 2 added outlining other reported symptoms of COVID-19.</p>   | 5 May 2020    | 5 May 2020          |
| 2.8     | <p>Enhanced Testing:</p> <p>Added points regarding isolation if symptoms resolve prior to test result returned and isolation requirements if a positive PCR test result is returned.</p>  | 1 May 2020    | 1 May 2020          |
| 2.7     | <p>Added a caveat stating how the case definition has been developed, noting its ongoing review.</p> <p>Suspect Case:</p> <p>Removed the table presentation and revised to present summarised information.</p> <p>Enhanced Testing:</p> <p>Section added.</p>   | 24 April 2020 | 24 April 2020       |
| 2.5     | <p>Probable Case:</p> <p>Reclassified probable cases as 'a person, who has not been tested'.</p> <p>Suspect Case:</p> <p>Added more descriptors to categories outlined in high-risk settings.</p>   | 6 April 2020  | 6 April             |

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|---------|---|---------------|---------------------|
|         | <p>Added footnote 3 'In certain high risk outbreak settings, public health units may consider testing asymptomatic contacts to inform management of the outbreak'.</p> <p>Added footnote directing to 'information on geographically localised areas with elevated risk of community transmission'.</p>   |               |                     |
| 2.4     | <p>Probable Case:</p> <p>Added household contacts of confirmed or probable cases of COVID-19 to those classified as a probable case.</p>  | 26 March 2020 | 26 March 2020       |
| 2.3     | <p>Probable Case:</p> <p>Added definition of a probable case</p> <p>Suspect Case:</p> <p>Presented a table outlining epidemiological criteria, clinical criteria and actions based of level of risk.</p>  | 24 March 2020 | 24 March 2020       |
| 2.1     | <p>Suspect Case:</p> <p>Added a footnote outlining recommended temperature collection techniques.</p> <p>Clinical Criteria</p> <p>Updated fever classification to be <math>\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}</math>.</p>  | 20 March 2020 | 20 March 2020       |
| 2.0     | <p>Suspect Case:</p> <p>Added 'if any healthcare worker with direct patient contact has a fever (<math>\geq 37.5</math>) AND an acute respiratory infection (e.g., shortness of breath, cough, sore throat), they are classified as a suspect case'.</p> <p>Epidemiological Criteria</p> <p>Removed reference to casual contact.</p>  | 13 March 2020 | 13 March 2020       |
| 1.18    | <p>Suspect Case:</p> <p>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'.</p> <p>Epidemiological Criteria</p> <p>Removed the list summarising risk levels of the country transmission risk assessment, amended to 'international travel in the 14 days before illness onset'.</p> | 10 March 2020 | 10 March 2020       |
| 1.15    | <p>Suspect Case:</p> <p>Added 'if the patient satisfies epidemiology and clinical criteria, they are classified as a suspect case'.</p>   | 3 March 2020  | 3 March 2020        |

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|---------|--|------------------|---------------------|
|         | <p>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.'</p> <p>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'.</p> <p>Added a list summarising risk level of the country transmission risk assessment.</p> |                  |                     |
| 1.14    | <p>Person under investigation:<br/>Removed section.<br/>Suspect Case:<br/>Epidemiological criteria<br/>Added footnote to present a country transmission risk assessment list, in lieu of the person under investigation section.</p>   | 2 March 2020     | 2 March 2020        |
| 1.12    | <p>Person under investigation:<br/>Added Cambodia to the list of countries in which returned travellers should be considered for testing.</p>  | 27 February 2020 | 27 February 2020    |
| 1.11    | <p>Person under investigation:<br/>Added Italy to the list of countries in which returned travellers should be considered for testing.</p>   | 26 February 2020 | 26 February 2020    |
| 1.10    | <p>Person under investigation:<br/>Added Iran and South Korea to the list of countries in which returned travellers should be considered for testing.</p>  | 23 February 2020 | 23 February 2020    |
| 1.9     | <p>Confirmed Case:<br/>Updated to state 'a validated specific SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid test'.<br/>Person under investigation:<br/>Added caveat for a person to be managed as a suspect case 'until COVID-19 is confirmed or excluded as the cause of illness.</p>   | 21 February 2020 | 21 February 2020    |
| 1.7     | <p>Person under investigation:<br/>Added section.</p>  | 15 February 2020 | 15 February 2020    |
| 1.6     | <p>Definitions amended to update references of 2019-nCov to COVID-19.</p>  | 14 February 2020 | 14 February 2020    |
| 1.4     | <p>Rationale for the current case definitions:<br/>Added section.</p>  |                  |                     |

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|---------|---|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1.3     | Suspect Case:<br>Epidemiological Criteria<br>Amended close contact to include 'confirmed case' only.<br>Clinical Criteria<br>Separated previous criteria into two points.   | 4 February 2020 | 4 February 2020     |
| 1.2     | Suspect Case:<br>Epidemiological Criteria<br>Added '(including transit through) mainland China'.<br>Added close contact to include 'confirmed or suspected case'.<br>Clinical Criteria<br>Combined the previous two criteria into a single criterion point. | 2 February 2020 | 2 February 2020     |
| 1.1     | Suspect Case:<br>Epidemiological Criteria<br>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     |