Guidance for people tested for COVID-19

As part of Australia’s response to COVID-19, public health units around Australia have increased testing. People may have a COVID-19 test for several reasons.

‘Suspect case’ testing

You will be tested as a ‘suspect case’ if you:

- have had close contact with a COVID-19 case
- have been somewhere where there are cases (e.g. overseas, a cruise ship or in a community with cases)
- work in a healthcare or residential care setting and have symptoms of COVID-19.

If you are a ‘suspect case’ you must stay home and quarantine until you receive your result.

If you receive a positive test result, you are now a ‘confirmed case’. You must isolate until you meet the appropriate release from isolation criteria.

If you test negative and already required to quarantine, you must:

- stay in quarantine for the remainder of the 14-day period or
- stay in quarantine until released by your doctor or the local public health unit.

If you test negative but still have symptoms you should stay home until these resolve.

If you have symptoms and have had close contact with a COVID-19 case, but initially tested negative, you should be re-tested.

Enhanced testing

At present, if you are not a ‘suspect case’, you can also be tested if:

1. You have certain symptoms, including symptoms of respiratory infection.
2. You do not have symptoms but live or work in a high-risk setting where there is a COVID-19 outbreak.
3. You are an organ donor or recipient.
4. You do not have symptoms and are a returned traveller in hotel quarantine.

This will help prevent spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory diseases and will help protect our community. See How to protect yourself and others.
I had a test for COVID-19 under the enhanced testing procedures. What can I do while waiting for the result?

If you are unwell with symptoms of cold or flu you should stay home until you are well.

If you do not have any symptoms you may return to work or activities.

If you do not have symptoms but you work in health or aged care, until you receive your result, additional controls must be applied, including:

- only working in roles that do not involve face to face patient care
- wearing appropriate personal protective equipment including a mask.

If you are a close contact of a confirmed case or are in hotel quarantine, you must stay in quarantine.

My test for COVID-19 under the enhanced testing procedures was positive, what now?

If your test for COVID-19 is positive you are now a ‘confirmed case.’ You must isolate until you are officially released from isolation. Your doctor or the local public health unit will advise you.

My test for COVID-19 under the enhanced testing procedures was negative, what now?

If your test for COVID-19 is negative and you have cold or flu symptoms, you should stay home until you feel well.

My test for COVID-19 under the enhanced testing procedures was negative but I still have symptoms, what should I do?

COVID-19 symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat and shortness of breath. These are common in other viral respiratory infections.

When there are few cases of COVID-19 in your community, it is more likely that another respiratory virus is the cause of your symptoms.

However, if your symptoms worsen, change, last longer than expected, or if you are concerned you should seek medical advice.

Your doctor will assess your risk and will consider a number of factors including:

- your history, symptoms and possible exposures,
- the number of COVID-19 cases in the local community, and
- the setting where you live, work or visit.

On the basis of that assessment, your doctor may ask you to have another COVID-19 test. While you are unwell you should stay home until your acute symptoms resolve.