Information for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities on coronavirus (COVID-19)

Welcome to the latest update of COVID-19 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households, communities and organisations. Things can change quickly so it's important to stay informed. Visit health.gov.au and niaa.gov.au

Key messages

- What you need to know about wearing face masks
- Keeping your mob safe from COVID-19
- If you're feeling sick, stay home, get tested
- Changes to travel restrictions
- Looking after your health and wellbeing
- Thank you to our health services

What you need to know about wearing face masks
With cases of coronavirus rising, in Victoria and some parts of New South Wales, some of us will need to wear a face mask whenever we leave home. Wearing a mask helps keep you and other people safe from the virus, but only if you are wearing it the right way. This includes putting it on and off the right way.

Tips for using and wearing a mask:
- Make sure to wash your hands with soap or use hand sanitiser before putting a mask on, and right after you take it off.
- Make sure it covers your mouth and your nose – don't let it hang around your neck. The mask should fit snugly around your face.
- If your mask has a metal nose strip, make sure it is shaped across your nose.
- Once your mask is on, it's really important that you don't pull it up or down, just keep it on the whole time until you get home.
- If your mask gets damp or torn, you need to change it.

- Don't touch the front of your mask.
- When you take your mask off, remove it from the ears (don't grab the front), and put it straight in the bin or the wash.
- Single use masks can only be used once, so after wearing one it should go in the bin straight away.
- If you have a reusable cloth mask, you can wash it in the washing machine with other clothes. You can also hand wash it using soap and the warmest appropriate water setting for the cloth.
- Dry the cloth mask in a clothes dryer or in fresh air before you re-use it. Keep it clean in a sealed plastic bag ready for the next use.

It's important to stay up to date with the latest advice on wearing masks in your area. From 2 August, people in Victoria must wear a mask when they leave home. The latest information for Victorian communities is available here.

Check out the 3KND Kool N Deadly mob wearing their masks to stay safe in the studio while broadcasting to the Victorian Aboriginal community.

If you are in an area where your local government has advised you must wear a mask in public, please follow their directions. Everyone should keep up with the latest advice for their region – keep checking your state or territory government websites or visit australia.gov.au

Keeping your mob safe from the spread of COVID-19

Wearing a mask helps stop people who have the virus from passing it on to others and helps stop you catching the virus from other people. However, don't get comfy just because you're wearing a mask.

We still need to keep on doing all the other things we've been doing the past few months to keep our communities safe. This includes:

- Staying two big steps (or 1.5 metres) from other people
- Staying away from crowded places
- Washing hands often with soap and water (or use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser)
- Coughing and sneezing into our elbows, and if you are unwell, staying at home
- Getting tested if you have any symptoms (cough, fever, sore throat)
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Doing these things is important, no matter where you live, however some communities are experiencing higher rates of virus spread than others. For example, areas of Greater and Western Sydney and Victoria are now considered COVID-19 hot spots. People in hot spot areas are being asked to be extra careful about their activities out of the house, and people should avoid travelling to or from hot spots.

It's important to keep up to date with the latest advice for your area. Visit your state and territory government website for the latest information:
- Australian Capital Territory
- New South Wales
- Northern Territory
- Queensland
- South Australia
- Tasmania
- Victoria

- <u>Western Australia</u>

We all have a role to play in keeping our communities safe, especially our younger people aged 20-29 who now have higher levels of infection than any other age groups. Check out this <u>music video</u> titled 'One point 5' by Indigenous artists Nooky and Mi-Kaisha, encouraging young people to keep family, communities and Elders safe.

If you're feeling sick, stay home, get a test
Going to school, work, or even to the shops when you are unwell means you might pass the virus on to other people without even knowing it.

This is why it's so important to stay at home if you're feeling unwell and get tested for COVID-19. Make sure you call your local health clinic as a first step and tell them about your symptoms. This will help them prepare for your arrival and protect other people at the clinic. You will need to stay at home and isolate until you receive your test results.

As well as funding 150 GP respiratory clinics (23 of which are at Aboriginal Controlled Community Health Services), the Australian Government is working closely with <u>National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO)</u>, its affiliates and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services to provide culturally safe access to testing across Australia. This can include:

- engaging Aboriginal Liaison Officers to provide hospital-based support;
- providing transport to and from GP respiratory clinics and other testing facilities for patients and Aboriginal health practitioners who are with them;
- Aboriginal health practitioner consultations on the phone; and
- COVID-safe messaging and information on social media.

Call your health service or check out the state and territory links above to find out where you can get tested.

So remember, if you are feeling unwell, call your work and let them know you are sick and can't come in. Stay home, with no visitors, and make sure to get tested as soon as you can. For information about support payments that might be available to you for missing work, visit <u>australia.gov.au</u>

Changes to travel restrictions
Because the situation keeps changing, with high levels of virus spread in some parts of the country, state and territory governments have each put in place travel restrictions. It is important to find out what restrictions may affect you depending on where your community is located. Travel restrictions are in place to help keep everyone safe by stopping the spread of the virus. If you don't need to travel, it is safest at this time to stay at home.

We all have a part to play in keeping our communities safe. Check out this great <u>video from kids from Maningrida Sport and Rec</u> to remind us all how we can stay safe.
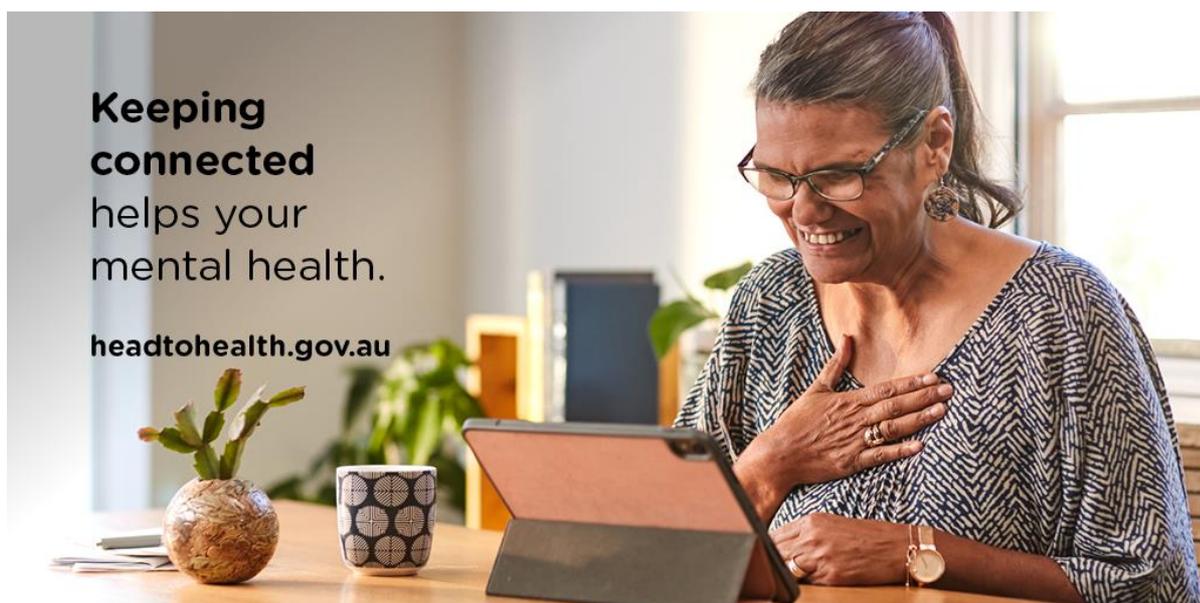
Looking after your health and wellbeing
Just because we're staying home more, doesn't mean we should miss important medical appointments.

Keeping your health and wellbeing in check is important especially for our Elders and people living with a chronic health condition. Make sure you keep up with regular appointments, as well as important things like bowel and breast cancer screenings.

Remember to get your free 715 Health Check, available for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Talk to your local medical service or clinic about the safest way to get your health check. It's not too late to get your free flu vaccination either.

Keep looking after your mental health and wellbeing. Many people are feeling anxious or stressed as a result of how COVID-19 is impacting them, our families and community. Beyond Blue and Gayaa Dhuwi 'Proud Spirit' are two great online resources for information and advice on things we can do to support our mental health during these challenging times. There are also support services if you or someone you know is experiencing family or domestic violence. There is no excuse for violence – help is here.

If you have any concerns about your health and wellbeing, call your local health service or GP. They can talk to you about ways to stay healthy as safely as possibly.

Thank you to our health services
Finally, a big 'Thank you' to all the health services and workers right across the country. They are all working incredibly hard to keep us safe and healthy.