



# Mental health and wellbeing support for employees during the COVID-19 pandemic



Mental health and wellbeing is important. Our mental health is part of each of us. The COVID-19 pandemic and other challenges have resulted in many people feeling:

- down
- confused
- frustrated
- anxious
- depressed
- concerned about the constantly changing situation and yearning for things to get back to normal.

For most, COVID-19 has changed the way we live and work for now. Our experiences differ for many reasons, including where you live and your type of work. For some it's meant working remotely, learning new ways to stay safe in the workplace or juggling restrictions with work and care responsibilities. No matter what your age or circumstances are, it's vital that you look after your mental health and know what support is available. Help may also be needed to find a new job, or to start study or training.



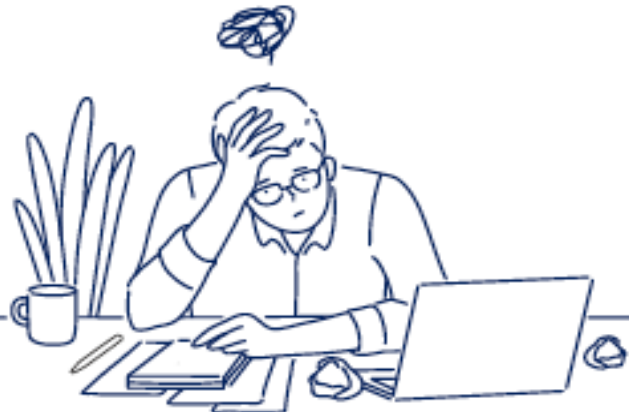
## Returning to the workplace

Some have enjoyed working remotely and may be concerned about returning to the physical workplace. Others have missed the face-to-face interaction with colleagues and can't wait to return. Whatever your perspective, we all need to know how our employer is making the workplace COVID safe and what individual behaviours employees need to follow. If required, your workplace may have a COVIDSafe plan and you can ask your employer about its plan.

Some people are at greater risk of more serious illness if they were to get COVID-19. If you have a medical condition that you think may put you at higher risk, talk to your doctor about returning to the workplace. You should also talk to your employer, as they need to consider your health status when assessing if it is safe for you to return.

Employers should:

- consult workers about the steps they intend to take to prevent the spread of COVID-19
- implement measures for physical distancing like rearranging furniture to spread people out or limiting the number of people in the workplace at any one time
- remind workers to practise good hygiene and provide hygiene facilities
- require workers to stay home when sick
- clean the workplace regularly and thoroughly
- make a plan for what they will do if there is COVID-19 in the workplace.



## Using public transport to get to work

Everyone should continue to keep 1.5 metres from others. If the service you are waiting for is busy, consider waiting for the next one if possible. If this is likely to be a regular issue, explore options with your employer, like working from home, or starting earlier or later.

Where there is low community transmission of COVID-19, wearing a mask in the community when you are well is not generally recommended.

Where there is high community transmission, you may choose to wear a mask or public health authorities may require you to wear a mask. If physical distancing is difficult to maintain, for example on public transport, covering your face with a mask can provide some extra protection. Visit the Department of Health's Masks webpage [www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/how-to-protect-yourself-and-others-from-coronavirus-covid-19/masks](http://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/how-to-protect-yourself-and-others-from-coronavirus-covid-19/masks) for more information. Visit Safe Work Australia's website [www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au](http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au) for information about the use of masks in the workplace.

## Steps employees should take to stay safe

Everyone, whether at work or out in public, should be COVIDSafe:

- practise good hygiene
- stay 1.5 metres from others where possible
- stay at home if sick
- get tested if you have any cold or flu like symptoms.

Getting tested when sick ensures public health authorities can detect the virus quickly and act to stop the spread.

Having the COVIDSafe app helps public health authorities to contact you faster if you have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19. This will help you get the advice you need to limit the risk of you spreading the virus in your community.

## Looking after your mental health and wellbeing

Looking after your mental health and wellbeing is just as important as your physical safety at work. We're all trying to build new skills to be resilient in ways we haven't had to before. If you're feeling concerned, it's not only OK to ask for help, but essential. There are lots of supports available for people facing different challenges and you can find a list in the support section of the brochure.

For people already living with mental illness, it's important to keep getting help. Treatment and care may change over time so use the phone and internet to stay connected to your support network.

## Communication at work

With many things changing quickly, it's important to keep communicating with your manager and your team. Be open and honest about concerns you have about returning to work or the work itself. This will help you to address issues, reduce conflict and adapt to the changes.



## Change in the workplace

Change can be uncomfortable and uncertain. Remind yourself it's okay to feel off-balance as you and the team adapt to new ways of working and adapting in the workplace. Take each day as it comes and be mindful of our different ways of coping with change.

## Routine helps

Creating a new routine can help you settle back into the workplace or learn to adapt to new COVIDSafe ways. It is also an opportunity to think about activities that you would like to build into your new routine during this fresh start. This could include using new ways of communicating and activities like exercise, meditation or reading.

## Make time for you

Staying up to date with the latest information, changes and priorities can be tiring. It is important you build in time for sleep, exercise and time to refresh and recharge to help you manage this additional load.



## Get support

Reaching out for support if you are feeling concerned can help you bounce back faster than keeping things to yourself. It may be with family and friends or through professional supports, but we all need support and advice from time to time.

## Contacts

### Information for employers and employees

**Safe Work Australia:** information for employers and employees, resources and tool kits to help make the workplace safe.

[www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au](http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au)



### 24/7 services offering counselling and support

**Head to Health:** The Australian Government's digital mental health gateway provides a range of information, advice, and links to free and low-cost phone and online mental health services. [www.headtohealth.gov.au](http://www.headtohealth.gov.au)

**Beyond Blue:** Coronavirus Mental Health Wellbeing Support Service provides support on a range of mental health issues and is available by phone or online via chat or email

[1800 512 348](tel:1800512348) | <https://coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au/>

**Lifeline Australia:** a crisis support service that provides short-term support at any time for people who are having difficulty coping or staying safe. [13 11 14](tel:131114) | [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)

**Kids Helpline:** a free, private and confidential phone and online counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25 years. [1800 55 1800](tel:1800551800) | [www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au)

**Suicide Call-Back Service:** for anyone considering suicide, living with someone who is considering suicide, or bereaved by suicide, the Suicide Call Back Service is available. [1300 659 467](tel:1300659467) | [www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au](http://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au)

**MensLine Australia:** a telephone and online counselling service for men. [1300 78 99 78](tel:1300789978) | [www.mensline.org.au](http://www.mensline.org.au)

**Open Arms:** Veterans and Families Counselling: provides current serving armed forces personnel, veterans and their families free and confidential counselling, group treatment programs and community and peer networks. [1800 011 046](tel:1800011046) | [www.openarms.gov.au](http://www.openarms.gov.au)

## Face to face support

### Your General Practitioner

If you or your family experiences persistent concerns, please talk to your local General Practitioner, who is your gateway to mental health and other health services. [www.healthdirect.gov.au/australian-health-services](http://www.healthdirect.gov.au/australian-health-services)

### Counsellors

The Australian Psychological Society provides a simple search tool to connect with a psychologist in your area via telehealth. Medicare-eligible Australians can access telehealth consultations during the coronavirus outbreak. Search to suit your needs at: [www.psychology.org.au/Find-a-Psychologist](http://www.psychology.org.au/Find-a-Psychologist)

### headspace

headspace provides free or low cost services to young people aged between 12 to 25 years old, their families and friends. headspace provides holistic care in four key areas – mental health, related physical health, alcohol and other drug use, and social and vocational support. A map of headspace sites is available on the headspace website. [www.headspace.org.au](http://www.headspace.org.au)

### Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME)

AIME is an imagination curriculum and mentoring program aimed at keeping young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people engaged in education and growing their aspirations.

AIME provides a platform for university students and community ambassadors to give back through mentorship, tutoring sessions, workshops and an established curriculum, across 33 locations as well as online and through partnerships with 250 schools. <https://aimementoring.com/>

### Positive Partnerships Program

This program builds partnerships between schools and parents and carers to improve educational outcomes of students with autism. It provides current, relevant and evidence-based information through workshops and online resources. [www.positivepartnerships.com.au/](http://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/)

## Online resources

### **Student Wellbeing Hub**

The Student Wellbeing Hub provides age specific and tailored information online for educators, parents and students. You can access practical, evidenced-based strategies in plain language to help reduce the risk of anxiety and depression in children and young people.

[www.studentwellbeinghub.edu.au](http://www.studentwellbeinghub.edu.au)

### **ReachOut**

ReachOut helps under 25s with everyday questions in tough times. The website has information resources and self-help tools so young people can take practical steps to understand and manage their mental health. The website also includes a safe, supportive and anonymous space for young people to talk to others and share what they're going through. [www.au.reachout.com](http://www.au.reachout.com)

### **TEN – The Essential Network**

An app supporting health professionals working in health, aged care and disability services to manage life and work through COVID-19.

[Download the app for Apple](#) | [Download the app for Android](#)

## Career Support and Information

### **National Careers Institute**

Support for young people to navigate post-school pathways is available at

[www.nci.dese.gov.au](http://www.nci.dese.gov.au).

### **Course Seeker**

Information about thousands of online and on campus courses is provided in a consistent and comparable way at [www.courseseeeker.edu.au](http://www.courseseeeker.edu.au).

### **Career Planning**

Unbiased information about career planning, career pathways and work transitions is available at [www.myfuture.edu.au](http://www.myfuture.edu.au).

### **Career Mentoring**

Information on the headspace Digital Work and Study Program and Career Mentoring Program to support young people aged 15-25 years old to plan a career, find employment or work towards further education is available at

<https://headspace.org.au/our-services/digital-work-and-study-service/>