



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

Welcome to the latest update on COVID-19 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households, communities and organisations. This month, we are focusing on the importance of staying vigilant, to keep our mob safe.

Key messages

- Continue receiving updates
- October is Mental Health Month, look after your wellbeing
- Keeping culture safe
- What it's like getting tested for COVID-19
- Why health workers wear personal protective equipment
- Continue to look out for each other

Continue receiving updates

Thank you for keeping up to date on important information about coronavirus. Together, we can keep mob safe. From next month, there will be some changes in how we send out the newsletter. You will no longer get these updates from the Australian Government Department of Health unless you subscribe to our new distribution list.

We will continue producing the newsletter. We'd love to have you on our list so that you stay informed and can share essential information with your mob, at work and at home.

A [subscription link is available here](#).

Department of Health



October is Mental Health Month, looking after wellbeing

2020 has been a really hard year. For those of us living with mental illness, it's been especially tough. And some people are experiencing mental health issues for the first time.

All of this makes Mental Health Month even more important this year. The month-long focus on mental health happens every October. This is a timely reminder to focus on the importance of good mental health, and to seek help and support when you need it.

If you're feeling worried or anxious, and if things are playing on your mind, you are not alone. Many people are feeling like this. Try to make time for yourself to unwind and relax. That could be going for daily walks and getting fresh air, or taking up a new hobby. Connect with your family and friends and share what's on your heart. Get enough sleep and eat well.

And if you feel like things are getting on top of you, or you need support, there is help out there.

Staying mentally well is important for your overall wellbeing. [Gayaa Dhuwi, Proud Spirit Australia](#), provides leadership in social and emotional wellbeing and mental health. They have a [range of resources](#) to support good social and emotional wellbeing and ways we can manage our stress and anxiety.

Tom Calma has also shared this [special message](#) about looking after mental health during these challenging times.

Keeping culture safe

COVID-19 has had a big effect on the way we do things, including ceremonies like sorry business. It's hard not to hug and keep a distance from each other when someone has passed away or at a funeral service. But, it's really important we do these things to protect each other and our Elders from COVID-19.

Just because we can't hug or get together in big groups doesn't mean we can't support each other. Make sure to keep in touch with your mob and be there for them as best you can.

We can still stay connected during these times in safe ways, like talking on the phone or yarning in person, while staying two big steps away from each other.

What it's like getting tested for COVID-19



35 year-old Larrakia man, Jonathan, recently went to get a COVID-19 test after feeling a bit sick. Jonathan says he wasn't sure if he had just caught a cold or if it was coronavirus.

"I woke up with a sore throat and a snuffle. I didn't want to risk it and infect other people so I went for a test," says Jonathan.

Jonathan lives in inner Sydney and he went to the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital for his test as it was close by.

"I walked in the front door and they gave me a mask to wear.

"It felt really serious looking at the nurses in their protective gear, with goggles and a gown and everything else on. But they were just so friendly. They gave me a form to fill in. Then they put my details into a computer and told me to sit in a particular spot until the nurse called me into the testing room.

She took one swab up my nose which felt a bit gross, and another one in my throat. I was in and out in 15 minutes," says Jonathan.

Following the test, Jonathan says he was asked to head home and stay there until he got his results. This meant he couldn't leave his house or yard. He couldn't go to work, the shops or have any visitors.

"Two days later I got a text message saying I was negative. Phew!"

Jonathan was a bit nervous before the test but now he says there is no need to feel worried about getting it done.

"It wasn't really bad, just a bit unpleasant when getting my swab up the nose," says Jonathan.

"It's very quick and simple. And it's good to get it done for peace of mind."

[Dr Ngiare Brown explains in this video](#) what to do if you need to get tested for coronavirus and what the testing looks like.

Why health workers wear personal protective equipment

Dr Ngiare Brown explains in this video why health care workers need to wear personal protective equipment.

We'd love for you to share our videos with your online networks and community, to remind people about the need to keep staying safe from COVID-19.



You can also help keep our mob safe by [downloading the stakeholder kit](#), [booklets](#), and posters, and [sharing these resources](#) within your community.

To order hard copies for, email indigenous.ops@health.gov.au.

Continue to look out for each other

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, our communities have done an amazing job to keep our mob safe!

We can be proud to know that we've worked hard to protect our communities and Elders.

Over the past month infection rates have gone down around Australia. There have also been a relatively low number of cases in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This is a result of so many of us listening to and following the health advice.

This doesn't mean COVID-19 has gone away completely. The outbreak in Victoria has shown how quickly COVID-19 can start to spread again. So please make sure that you continue doing the following:

- If you're feeling sick, get tested as soon as you can, and keep away from everyone else as much as possible until you get your test results.
- When you're out, try to keep two big steps away from other people all the time.
- If you wear a mask, make sure it's on properly. Don't touch the front of the mask once you have it on. If the mask is a single use mask, put it in the bin after you use it. If you have a cotton mask, wash and fully dry it after each use.

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- Wash your hands with soap regularly, especially when you get home after being out of the house and before you eat.
- Sneeze and cough into your elbows, not your hands.

**HELP OUR COMMUNITIES TO STAY HEALTHY, STRONG AND
CONNECTED, BY SHARING TIPS ONLINE #KEEPOURMOBSAFE**

