



Living well in the COVID-19 pandemic

A tool to help people to make COVIDSafe decisions about work, transport, and social activities in the COVID-19 pandemic.

To stay COVIDSafe all eligible people should get vaccinated against COVID-19.

In addition everyone must always:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, or use hand sanitiser.
- Keep your distance – stay at least 1.5 metres away from other people.
- Consider downloading the COVIDSafe app.
- Use COVID-19 check-in apps when attending venues

Also:

- Stay home if you are unwell with cold or flu-like symptoms and arrange to get tested.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes (with your inside elbow).
- Clean frequently touched surfaces often.
- Wear a mask when outside your home if directed or if there are cases in the community
- Get the flu shot.
- Stay up to date with local case numbers and public health advice in your area.
- Use this tool and talk to your doctor to help you decide what actions to take.
- Think about how you may change your activities including social, work, volunteer, and where possible your transport and living arrangements, if COVID-19 cases increase.

Risk related to COVID-19?

COVID-19 can spread through respiratory droplets and smaller particles from an infected person and anyone can catch it.

Most people who contract COVID-19 have mild illness. Some people can become very unwell.

The most important risk factor for severe COVID-19 illness is older age. Risk increases substantially above 70 years of age. Some medical conditions also increase risk.

People who have higher risk of severe disease include those who:

- are 70 years of age or over

- have had an organ transplant and are on immune suppressive therapy
- have had a bone marrow transplant in the last 24 months or are on immune suppressive therapy for graft versus host disease
- have blood cancer, e.g. leukaemia, lymphoma or myelodysplastic syndrome
- are having chemotherapy or radiotherapy.

Other conditions also add risk. More information on these conditions is available at the Department of Health [website](#).

The best way to protect yourself against COVID-19 is to get vaccinated.

If there are only a few cases in the local community, your actual risk of getting COVID-19 is low, regardless of your age or health.

If you have questions about your risk speak to your doctor.

Personal responsibility to managing health risk related to COVID-19

Everyone needs to make decisions about their activities and take responsibility for them. People will have different things that are important to them and will be comfortable with different levels of risk.

Everyone should consider:

- their personal risk
- the number of cases of COVID-19 where they live
- what activities are important to them
- the risk related to certain activities
- how much risk they wish to accept.

For example, when there are few community cases, some may want to hug their grandchildren while some people may not. Either approach is fine, people need to make choices that are suitable for them.

People may also want to develop an individual COVID-19 [action plan](#). This may be more important for people who are at high or moderate risk of severe COVID-19.

You can inform your action plan by:

- speaking to your doctor to get a better idea of your risk
- talking about your activities and weighing up your risk against what is important to you
- looking for different activities to enjoy with lower risk of exposure
- staying up to date with how many cases there are in your local community
- planning how you will change your activities if case numbers increase.



Activities and settings

COVID-19 vaccination reduces the risk of severe COVID-19 for all people, including those at increased risk of severe COVID-19.

Remember that if there are few cases in the local community, the risk of contracting COVID-19 is low.

However, when there are COVID-19 cases in the community some types of activities, events and settings may increase your risk of contracting COVID-19 illness.

This includes activities that:

- are closed environments, crowded situations or involve close contact with others
- have large numbers of people in close contact over an extended period (e.g. public transport at peak hour, weddings, protests or other large gatherings)
- require physical activity and close contact (e.g. dancing or contact sport)
- require vocalising in an indoor environment (e.g. choirs, singing in church or close communication such as shouting in a noisy environment)
- require sharing objects with others (e.g. utensils at a buffet)
- require sharing accommodation or amenities with others (e.g. cruise ships, hostels)
- are longer (the risk for exposure and transmission increases with time).

When there are higher case numbers or community transmission, people need to consider risk more carefully. If you are at a higher risk of severe disease, you should carefully consider what you do and avoid higher risk activities.

Travel to areas with higher case numbers, or going to events with people from areas with higher case numbers, may increase the risk of contracting COVID-19. However, the risk of exposure to COVID-19 is reduced as more people in the community are vaccinated against COVID-19.

Work and volunteer settings

COVID-19 vaccination reduces the risk of severe COVID-19 illness for all people, including those at increased risk of severe COVID-19.

Remember if there are few cases in the local community the risk of contracting COVID-19 illness is low.

People at increased risk of severe COVID-19 can still work or volunteer, particularly where they are vaccinated against COVID-19 or where there are few or no local cases.

Some work settings may place employees at higher risk of COVID-19, either through:

- potential exposure to infected people, such as in health or aged care settings
- working conditions where physical distancing is difficult (e.g. working in the disability or aged care sector)
- work with multiple face-to-face interactions with others
- working in a setting associated with increased transmission of the virus (e.g. meat processing)
- are longer (the risk for exposure and transmission increases with time).

The risk of exposure to COVID-19 is reduced as more people in the community are vaccinated against COVID-19.

People with increased risk could consider developing an individual workplace risk management plan with their employer. The plan should be specific to them, their work and their workplace, including specific mitigations that have been implemented in the workplace, and the number of cases in the community.

For more information see the Department of Health's [Information for Employers](#) and Safe Work Australia's [COVID-19 Information for workplaces](#).