



How do I monitor my COVID-19 symptoms?

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If you tested positive for COVID-19 and are recovering at home, you can monitor your own health with help from your doctor or healthcare provider. Writing down your daily symptoms can help you see if your symptoms are getting better, or if you should see a doctor or go to hospital.

Most cases of COVID-19 are mild and can be managed at home. Some people who are at higher risk may need specific antiviral treatments prescribed by their healthcare provider. For more information about who is eligible for COVID-19 oral treatments, visit www.health.gov.au/covid19-translated

What symptoms do I need to write down every day?

It is helpful to write down your symptoms each day during your illness. Write down if your COVID-19 symptoms are getting better, staying the same, or getting worse. This can help you and your doctor know how you are feeling. For each day you are recovering, write down:

- your temperature (to check if you have a fever)
- how fast you are breathing
- whether you are having difficulty breathing, or are short of breath
- if you are coughing and how severe the cough is
- if you have muscle aches and pains
- if you have a headache
- if you are feeling tired
- if you are vomiting or have diarrhoea.

Your doctor may also ask you to monitor your oxygen level and pulse (heart rate).

What do I do if my symptoms are getting worse or I am worried?

If you are worried about your symptoms, please contact your doctor. You can also call the National Coronavirus Helpline on 1800 020 080 and receive an assessment of your symptoms over the phone. Select option 8 for free interpreting services.

It is possible to have mild symptoms at the start of your illness but become sicker over time.

Call an ambulance if you have any of these **serious symptoms**:

- difficulty breathing
- blue lips or face
- pain or pressure in the chest
- cold and clammy/wet, or pale and mottled, skin
- fainting or collapsing
- being confused
- becoming difficult to wake up
- little or no urine
- coughing blood.

If you have serious symptoms, do not wait. Call 000 (triple zero) for an ambulance immediately and tell them that you have COVID-19. If you don't speak English, when you call 000, ask for 'ambulance' and stay on the line and request an interpreter.

How do I measure my temperature?

You will need a thermometer to measure your temperature. If you do not have a thermometer, you can buy one from a pharmacy over the phone or online. The pharmacy can have it delivered to your home. Each thermometer is different, so follow the directions from the manufacturer.

If your temperature is 38 degrees or higher, you may have a fever. If this happens, you should contact your general practitioner for review as soon as possible.

How do I know if I am having difficulty breathing or am short of breath?

If you are having difficulty breathing, you may feel short of breath, have trouble breathing in and out, or feel like you cannot get enough air in your lungs.

You may feel this way:

- when you walk
- when you are sitting
- when you are speaking.

Write down if you feel your breathing is getting better, worse or is the same, and the date and time.

How do I measure how fast I am breathing?

You can measure how many breaths you take for 60 seconds (1 minute) using a timer on a phone. You can also use a clock with a second hand. Try to relax and breathe normally. Count how many times you breathe during the 60 seconds (1 minute). Write down how many breaths you took in 60 seconds (1 minute), and the date and time.

If your respiratory rate is 20-30 breaths per minute, this may indicate you are experiencing shortness of breath. If this happens, you should contact your general practitioner for review as soon as possible.

If your respiratory rate is more than 30 breaths per minute, you may be experiencing severe shortness of breath. If this happens, you should call an ambulance immediately and tell them that you have COVID-19.

This guidance is relevant to adults. These ranges may not reflect your age or health status and may need to be adapted. If you are unsure whether you are experiencing shortness of breath, contact your general practitioner as early as possible for review and tell them you have COVID-19. Your doctor or nurse can also count how fast you are breathing by watching your chest rise and fall when doing a video check-up/telehealth.

How do I measure my oxygen level and heart rate (pulse)?

If your doctor has asked you to check your oxygen level and heart rate (pulse), you will need a pulse oximeter. A pulse oximeter is a small device that clips on your middle or index finger. It does not hurt and only takes a minute to check.

You might be given a pulse oximeter by your doctor, hospital, or other care provider. You can also buy one from a pharmacy over the phone or online, and have it delivered to your home.

Do not use a smartphone or smartwatch to check your oxygen level.

If you are looking after a child with COVID-19 and are asked to monitor their oxygen levels, you might need a pulse oximeter specially designed for children. Your doctor or nurse will discuss this with you.

How do I use a pulse oximeter?

1. Remove any nail polish or false nails from the finger you will use (a middle or index finger). Nail polish and false nails can stop the device from working properly.
2. Sit in an upright position and rest for five minutes before using the pulse oximeter.
3. The device works best when your hands are warm. Wiggle your fingers and rub them to warm them up.
4. Turn the pulse oximeter on.
5. Attach the clip to your middle or index finger so that the tip of your finger is touching the end of the device. Your fingernails and the screen of the pulse oximeter should be pointing up.
6. Keep your hand and fingers still.

7. Relax and breathe normally.
8. After waiting for one minute, check the number next to the SpO2 symbol. This number is your oxygen level.
9. Write down the number for your oxygen level and the date and time.
10. Check the number showing next to the PR (pulse rate) or the BPM (beats per minute) symbol. This number is your heart rate (pulse).
11. Write down the number for your heart rate and the date and time.

If you are not getting a reading, or if the reading is under 95%, wiggle your fingers, take a few breaths and try the device on a different finger (a middle or index finger).

Your oxygen level should be 95% or higher. If it is lower than this, then it could be a sign you need more check-ups with your doctor or nurse, or that it is safer for you to be in hospital.

- If your oxygen level reading is consistently under 95%, let the doctor or nurse looking after you know that your oxygen level is under 95%.
- If your oxygen level reading is consistently 92% or lower, call 000 for an ambulance immediately.
- If your heart rate is staying at or above 120 beats per minute, call an ambulance immediately.

This guidance is relevant to adults only on what oxygen level and heart rate may indicate moderate to severe symptoms. Your age and health status mean that these ranges may not reflect your individual circumstances and may need to be adapted. If you are unsure whether you are experiencing severe symptoms, contact your general practitioner as early as possible for review and tell them you have COVID-19.

Using a pulse oximeter if I have a darker skin tone

Pulse oximeters work by shining light through your skin to measure the level of oxygen in your blood. Some reports show that pulse oximeters may be less accurate if you have a darker skin tone. They may show readings higher than the level of oxygen in your blood.

If you have a darker skin tone, you should still use your pulse oximeter. The important thing will be to check your blood oxygen level regularly to see if your readings are going down. Write down all your readings with date and time.

How do I check how fast my heart is beating without a pulse oximeter?

To check your pulse (heart rate) without a pulse oximeter:

1. Rest for about five minutes before checking your heart rate
2. Place your index and middle fingers of one hand on the opposite wrist under the thumb
3. With your fingers lightly on your wrist, you can count the number of beats that you feel over 60 seconds (one minute). This is your heart rate.

COVID-19 support in your language



If you have any questions, you can find COVID-19 support in your language by calling the National Coronavirus Helpline on 1800 020 080. Select option 8 for free interpreting services.