



# What to expect when you have COVID-19

23 September 2022

## Testing positive for COVID-19

If you test positive for COVID-19 you must isolate immediately.

If you tested positive using a rapid antigen test, contact your state or territory health department to let it know.

For information and advice about what to do if you have tested positive for COVID-19, call the National Coronavirus Helpline on 1800 020 080. For free interpreting services, press option 8. The line operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

## How do I manage my COVID-19 symptoms?

Most people with COVID-19 have mild symptoms. The most common symptoms are:

- runny nose
- headache
- sneezing
- sore throat
- coughing – sometimes with an increase in phlegm.

Other symptoms that some people can have with COVID-19 include:

- fever or high temperature
- feeling very tired
- loss of taste and/or smell
- mild shortness of breath
- muscle or joint pains
- chills
- nausea/vomiting
- diarrhoea.

Mild symptoms can be managed at home with rest, fluids, healthy food and pain relief medications from your supermarket or pharmacy. Try to get plenty of rest, drink lots of water and eat well. You can still do light exercise if you feel well enough, within your home and/or garden if you have one.

If you are concerned about your symptoms, you can contact your doctor or local health service, or call the National Coronavirus Helpline on 1800 020 080. Press option 8 for free interpreting services.

## When should I call an ambulance?

There are symptoms of more serious illness that you should watch for. People with any of these symptoms should be treated in a hospital:

- difficulty with breathing, especially if it is getting worse over time
- blue lips or face
- pain or a feeling of pressure in the chest
- cold and sweaty
- pale or mottled skin
- fainting
- new problems with memory and difficulty thinking clearly
- becoming difficult to wake up
- little or no urine (wee), even though you have been drinking lots of fluid
- coughing blood.

**If you have any of the above symptoms, call (or ask someone else to call) emergency services on 000 immediately.** Tell the phone operator that you have COVID-19 with severe symptoms, and that you need an ambulance to be sent to you.

If you don't speak English, when you call triple zero (000), ask for 'ambulance' and stay on the line and request an interpreter. The triple zero (000) emergency services line will call the Translating and Interpreting Service and connect you with an interpreter using a priority line.

## Medical care while you are positive

Your state and territory health authority will connect you with a doctor, nurse or other health care provider to support you while you are sick.

The doctor or nurse will work with you to monitor your symptoms for as long as you are sick. You may need to monitor your temperature, oxygen levels and heart rate.

The doctor or nurse can also advise you of any other medicines that you might need to manage your symptoms, like paracetamol or ibuprofen. Oral rehydration solution can be used to help keep you well hydrated, especially if you have nausea or diarrhoea, or are vomiting.

## Do I need to isolate at home?

It is an Australian public health requirement that anyone diagnosed with COVID-19 must isolate. When a person has COVID-19, they can pass it on to other people. This is why people with COVID-19 are asked to isolate to protect their family and the community. Isolating means:

- you must stay at home unless you need to leave to get medical care or if you feel unsafe in your home
- if you need to leave home to visit a health care or family violence service or police, you must let the service know that you are coming and tell staff there that you have COVID-19
- if you can, you should live in a separate room that is away from other people in your household. You should always stay in your room, unless you need to go to the bathroom or need to leave your room for a special reason

- avoid being in any shared spaces in the house, like the living room or kitchen. If you must leave your room, you need to wear a mask when you move through any shared areas (for example, on your way to the toilet)
- other people who are not part of your usual household should not enter your home when someone is isolating in your home, unless they are providing medical or personal care, or emergency services.

### How long do I need to isolate for?

If you have no COVID-19 symptoms on day 5 after testing positive, you can leave isolation.

If you do have symptoms of COVID-19 on day 5 after testing positive, you should continue to isolate until symptoms have resolved.

You should avoid visiting or working in high-risk settings, such as aged or disability care facilities, for at least 7 days after testing positive, and only then if your symptoms have resolved.

You do not need another test to come out of isolation, although workplaces or schools may ask for a test before you return.

### How can the people I live with stay safe?

The people who live in your home are 'close contacts'. The people who live in your home can stay there if you or they cannot live somewhere else while you are isolating.

You may live with someone who has a weak immune system, is elderly or has another condition that increases their risk of having severe COVID-19. If necessary, contact your state or territory health department to see if it can help to find them another place to stay.

Different states and territories have different requirements for close contacts of people with COVID-19. Visit your state or territory health department website to see what rules apply to you and your close contacts.

Anyone who has been in close contact with a person with COVID-19 should get tested if they develop any of the symptoms described above. If they are leaving home isolation to get tested, they need to wear a mask and follow their state or territory rules to avoid infecting others.

### What can I do to keep other people safe at home?

COVID-19 spreads between people through droplets that are sprayed when an infected person talks, coughs or sneezes. The droplets can be so small that you cannot see them. To help protect other people in your household, you should:

- wash your hands with soap and water frequently and thoroughly
- avoid touching your face and eyes with your hands
- wear a face mask (covering your mouth and nose) around the house except when you are in your own room
- keep your mask on in any shared spaces – and make sure other people in your household are also wearing masks
- regularly clean the surfaces in the house by wiping the surfaces down while using gloves

- throw away your cleaning waste in a place where no one else will touch it

Everyone in the household should cover their mouth and nose if they cough or sneeze. Either cough or sneeze into your elbow or cover your mouth and nose with a tissue and immediately throw it in the bin after use.

## Medicines to treat COVID-19

COVID-19 oral treatments are an option for treating mild to moderate COVID-19 in adults. These are medicines that are taken as tablets or capsules. Oral treatments for COVID-19 work best when you take them as soon as possible after testing positive for the virus. You should talk to your doctor early to find out if you are eligible, should you get COVID-19.

COVID-19 oral treatments are not suitable for everyone. You can only get them if you have a doctor's prescription. These treatments are available for both vaccinated and unvaccinated people.

For more information about oral treatments, visit

[www.health.gov.au/resources/translated/coronavirus-covid-19-oral-treatments-for-covid-19-other-languages](http://www.health.gov.au/resources/translated/coronavirus-covid-19-oral-treatments-for-covid-19-other-languages)

## What can I do to take care of my mental health and wellbeing?

Being in isolation can be stressful. Let your doctor or nurse know about any mental health issues that you have had in the past and any new concerns. Here are some ideas for looking after your mental health during this time.

- keep in contact with friends, family and the wider community by using video technologies, such as WhatsApp, Telegram, WeChat, FaceTime and Zoom
- keep a daily routine that helps you feel good about yourself. This could include showering, having regular mealtimes, eating healthy meals and exercising at least twice a day (within your home or garden). Try to have a normal sleep pattern so you are keeping busy during the day and sleeping your normal hours at night.
- have some craft work or reading or other activities that you can do so you are not only using your computer or phone to pass the time
- learn more about COVID-19 from trustworthy and credible sources, such as your state or territory's health department website or the Department of Health and Aged Care: [health.gov.au](http://health.gov.au).

## If your child has COVID-19

Having your child diagnosed with COVID-19 can be very stressful for you and your family. Severe COVID-19 in children is rare; most children will have no symptoms, or only mild symptoms.

A doctor or nurse will treat your child based on your child's age, symptoms and past medical history.

Try to keep your child isolated from other family members where practical.

If you are worried about your child's symptoms, contact your doctor as soon as possible. If they are showing severe symptoms, call **000** immediately.

## Breastfeeding

If you are breastfeeding, you should continue to breastfeed or express breastmilk if you are feeling well. Research shows that mothers who have had COVID-19 pass antibodies to their infants through breastmilk.

## What is long COVID?

Long COVID is when your symptoms continue for some weeks or months after an infection with COVID-19. If you tested positive for COVID-19 more than a few weeks ago, and you are still feeling unwell, talk to your doctor about your symptoms and whether you need any more support.

For more information about long COVID, visit [www.health.gov.au/resources/translated/long-term-effects-of-covid-19-other-languages](http://www.health.gov.au/resources/translated/long-term-effects-of-covid-19-other-languages)

## Vaccination

Being fully vaccinated against COVID-19 reduces your risk of severe illness, hospitalisation, and death.

If you are not vaccinated against COVID-19, or are eligible for your next COVID-19 vaccine dose, you should make an appointment using the [COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic Finder](https://www.australia.gov.au/covid-19/vaccine-locator) (australia.gov.au) once you no longer have symptoms.

## Further support

If you have any questions or concerns, you can call the National Coronavirus Helpline on 1800 020 080, and press option 8 for free interpreting services.

