

COVID-19 fact sheet for close contacts

- A close contact is someone who has been close to a person with infectious COVID-19 and might have become infected with the COVID-19 virus.
- There are two ways to know if you are a close contact:
 1. You get a text or phone call from NSW Health telling you that you are a close contact
 2. You see from the website showing [COVID-19 case locations and venues of concern](#) that you have been to a close contact place on the day and time that an infectious person was there. If this happens to you, please call NSW Health on 1800 943 553.
- If you are a close contact of a person with COVID-19 you must isolate at home or another suitable place for 14 days since you were exposed. You must also get tested for COVID-19 as soon as possible, even if you don't have symptoms. Isolating means staying apart from all other people, including people who live in the same place as you do.
- If you are a close contact, please ask the following people to get tested and to isolate until they get a negative test result:
 - Everyone who lives in your home
 - Everyone who has visited your home since your close contact exposure
 - Everyone who has travelled to work with you since your close contact exposure, especially everyone who travelled in the same car
- If there was any period while you were at work and you were not wearing a mask, please ask everyone you spoke to or were in close contact with when not wearing a mask to get tested and isolate. This would be especially important for everyone who was close to you while you were eating or drinking.
- If you have had contact with a healthcare worker, please get them to speak to their Manager for a risk assessment before they return to work
- Close contacts must to isolate themselves by law; self-isolation is required under the Public Health (COVID- 19 Self Isolation) Order, and penalties can apply if the Order is not followed.

This fact sheet contains additional information to the [NSW Health COVID-19 Self-Isolation Guideline](#).

What do I need to do?

Immediately isolate

All close contacts need to isolate, even if you currently feel well.

You must isolate for at least 14 days after you last had contact with the infectious person.

You will be told how long you need to isolate in writing by a NSW Health authorised contact tracer (this may be a text message).

A contact tracer will contact you - you must tell the contact tracer the address of the place where you will be isolating and confirm your phone number.

Get tested for COVID-19

Even if you don't have symptoms, you must get tested [at your closest testing location](#):

1. as soon as possible when you first know you are a close contact, and
2. on day 7 after you were exposed if you can access a drive-through testing clinic or can walk or cycle to a testing clinic, and
3. between days 12 and 14 after you were exposed.

You must travel by private vehicle, or walk or cycle to get your test. You must not travel by public transport, taxi or ride-share to have COVID-19 testing. Wear a face mask that covers your nose and mouth at all times, and tell staff immediately that you are a close contact of a person with COVID-19.

If you test negative, you still need to remain in isolation until your isolation period finishes. This is because it can take up to 14 days for you to become COVID-19 positive after exposure.

If you develop [symptoms](#) at any stage of your isolation period, you should get tested immediately.

You will only be allowed to stop isolating if you have a test between days 12 and 14, and the result of this test is negative. If you do not have a test on or after day 12, you will be required to stay in isolation for 24 days after your last contact with the infectious person.

Notify people who have been near to you

Ask everyone who:

- lives in the same place as you, and
- who has been in close physical proximity to you (e.g. friends, work mates) in the last two days

to get tested and to isolate until they get a negative test result. You should keep separate from these people at all times. You need to tell them that you are a close contact, and ask them to read the [Advice for secondary close contacts](#) and follow the requirements.

If you work in a high-risk setting (such as an aged care home, military facility, residential disability home or day program, boarding school, boarding house, homeless shelter, correctional facility, remote industrial site with accommodation, migrant workers' accommodation, remote community, abattoir), you should notify the management, or ask the NSW Health Contact Tracing Team to help do so. Your co-workers may be required to get tested and isolate until they receive a negative result.

How do I isolate?

- Isolation means you must stay in your home or accommodation and stay completely separated from others. You cannot leave your home or accommodation, unless for medical care (including a COVID-19 test), or in an emergency. You cannot allow other people into your house or accommodation unless they usually live at the premises, or they are entering for medical or emergency purposes.
- Isolation is different from stay-at-home directions (lockdown). When you are Isolating, you are **not** permitted to leave your home for outdoor exercise, shopping, work or education.

To Isolate, you must:

- Go directly to the place where you will isolate (home, hotel or other accommodation)
- Not leave, unless for COVID-19 testing, urgent medical care, or in an emergency (including to avoid injury or escape from domestic violence). If you leave home for any of these reasons you must wear a face mask, stay 1.5 metres away from anyone else, and travel directly to and from the place you are going to.
- Travel in a privately-owned car or walk or cycle. You may only travel with other people if they are isolating with you. You must not use public transport, taxi or ride-share.
- Not leave isolation to receive COVID-19 vaccination. If you have an appointment, this will need to be rescheduled until you have finished isolating.
- Stay in your place of isolation for your entire Isolation period. You can go into your private garden, balcony or courtyard if you have one.

- Not go to work, school, childcare or public areas.
- Not have visitors
- Practice good hygiene:
 - Cover coughs and sneezes
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. You can also use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser. Wash your hands:
 - before entering an area where other people may go
 - before touching things used by other people
 - after using the bathroom
 - after coughing or sneezing
 - before putting on, and after removing, gloves and masks.
 - Clean all surfaces you touch often (counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables) at least once a day wearing disposable gloves. After cleaning apply a household disinfectant or diluted bleach solution.
- Ask your family, friends to pick up groceries and medicines for you or order online or by phone. Make sure that you don't come anywhere near these people when they drop things off for you. If you still need help with obtaining food and essential supplies, call the Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055.

What if I'm told I am a close contact and I'm away from home?

If you are away from home when you told you are a close contact, you should immediately get tested, return to your accommodation and isolate.

You may decide to spend your 14-day isolation period in your existing accommodation. This may be a hotel, motel or other form of accommodation, as long as you can safely stay there separated from other people.

If you are currently staying in temporary accommodation that ends before your isolation period finishes, or you have been asked to leave your accommodation by the owner or manager, NSW Health will help you. In exceptional circumstances, you may be permitted to travel to your usual place of residence to complete your self-isolation period. Please call your local Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055 for help.

Further information is available in [Advice for COVID-19 close contacts seeking exemption to travel home for self-isolation period](#).

How do I isolate from people I live with?

If you share a household with others and are planning to spend your isolation period at home, you must completely isolate from others in your household. This helps protect them from getting sick. You will need to:

- remain separated from others at all times
- stay and sleep in a different room
- use a separate bathroom, if available (otherwise you must clean the bathroom, including all taps handles, buttons and any other things you have touched with disinfectant after every use)
- not share household items including dishes, cups, towels, bedding, or other items. After using these items, you should wash them thoroughly with soap and water or use a dishwasher/washing machine
- keep out of shared/common areas as much as possible. If it is unavoidable, ensure that you wear a mask whenever you must use them (e.g. kitchen, hallway)

If you are unsure that you can completely isolate from other members of your household, please call your local [Public Health Unit](#) will help to find another place where you can stay for your isolation period. Please call 1300 066 055.

If you live with others who you cannot isolate separately from them (e.g. if they are your child or carer and alternative arrangements cannot be made), they will be required to isolate with you for your whole quarantine period (14 days from your exposure to COVID-19), and complete further testing.

If you become positive for COVID-19, and are isolating with another person/s, that person/s will become a close contact and will have to continue to isolate for another 14 days after you separate from them, or longer if you are unable to separate from.

If your child has symptoms or needs to isolate, please refer to the [advice for parents and carers](#).

What if I develop COVID-19 symptoms or feel unwell?

If you develop [symptoms](#) you should get tested immediately. You must not travel by public transport, taxi or ride-share. Wear a face mask that covers your nose and mouth at all times, and tell staff immediately that you are a close contact of a person with COVID-19.

Symptoms you should watch carefully for are:

- fever or history of fever (night sweats, chills)
- cough
- runny nose
- shortness of breath (difficulty breathing)
- sore throat
- loss of smell
- loss of taste
- muscle aches

Other symptoms of COVID-19 can include an acute blocked nose (congestion), fatigue, joint pain, headache, diarrhoea, nausea/vomiting, loss of appetite, unexplained chest pain and conjunctivitis.

If you become severely unwell and it is a medical emergency, you should phone Triple Zero (000). Tell the ambulance staff that you are a close contact of someone with COVID-19.

How do I cope with isolation?

- Talk to the other members of the family about COVID-19 to reduce anxiety. You can find accurate, up to date information at [COVID-19 – Frequently asked questions](#).
- Reassure young children.
- Keep up a normal daily routine as much as possible.
- Keep in touch with family members and friends via phone, email or social media.
- Exercise regularly at home. Options could include exercise DVDs, dancing, floor exercises, yoga, walking around the backyard or using home exercise equipment, such as a stationary bicycle if you have one. Exercise is a proven treatment for stress and depression.
- Arrange with your employer to work from home, if possible.
- Think about how you have coped with difficult situations in the past and reassure yourself that you will cope with this situation too. Remember that isolation won't last for ever.

When can I leave isolation?

You can leave self-isolation once you have completed the advised isolation period, have received a negative test result from your final test, have no symptoms and are **told you can leave isolation by an authorised contact tracer**.

If you are unsure if you can leave isolation, call your local [Public Health Unit](#) on 1300 066 055.

What happens if I don't follow isolation rules?

Not following the rules puts family, friends and the community at risk of serious illness. Not following these rules is also a criminal offence and attracts heavy penalties. For individuals, the maximum penalty is \$11,000, 6 months in prison, or both with a further \$5,500 fine for each day the offence continues.

What happens after I leave isolation?

You can return to daily activities in line with public health advice.

You should continue to practice good hygiene and physical distancing to reduce the spread of all contagious diseases:

- stay 1.5 metres away from people you don't live with
- wash your hands often for 20 seconds with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser
- avoid touching your face, especially your eyes and mouth
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your flexed elbow when coughing or sneezing
- get a test if you develop symptoms and isolate again until you get a negative result.

Keep up to date with the NSW Government's [COVID-19 rules](#)

More information and support

Financial support for individuals and households

If you're affected by COVID-19 and experiencing financial difficulty, please visit the [NSW Government website](#) for information on what financial support is available.

For more information and support while in home isolation:

4. [Lifeline Australia](#) : 13 11 14
A 24/7 crisis support service that provides short term support at any time for people who are having difficulty coping or staying safe.
5. [Beyond Blue Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service](#): 1800 512 348
6. [Kids Helpline](#) : 1800 551 800
A free, private and confidential 24/7 phone and online counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25 years.
7. NSW Mental Health Line: 1800 011 511
Mental health crisis telephone service in NSW.
8. National Coronavirus Health Information line: 1800 020 080
9. Visit [NSW Health - COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\)](#)