

NSW Health self-isolation guidelines for people suspected to have COVID-19 infection

If a doctor suspects you may have novel coronavirus (COVID-19) infection and they have organised testing, you must self-isolate and follow the advice below until your doctor advises you of the result of your test.

How long do I need to remain in home isolation?

You must self-isolate until your doctor advises you of the result of your test. Usually this is within 24 - 72 hours.

If the test is positive your doctor will provide you with advice and the local public health unit will be in contact to interview you and identify your close contacts.

If you test negative you will no longer need to stay in home isolation unless:

- you have already been advised to stay in home isolation because of recent overseas travel
- you have been identified as a close contact of someone else who does have COVID-19 infection.

In this case you will still need to remain in home isolation until the end of the 14 day period.

For more information, refer to [Release from isolation](#)

www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/release-from-isolation.aspx

Monitor symptoms

If your symptoms become serious (e.g. shortness of breath at rest or difficulty breathing), you should call 000. Tell the ambulance staff you are confirmed to have novel coronavirus (COVID-19). If your symptoms become worse, but are not serious, contact your doctor or the public health unit.

Can I go to work or school? Can I have visitors?

No. Home isolation means you must stay at your home or hotel and restrict your normal activities.

You cannot go to work, school, childcare, university, recreation facilities, public areas, or go shopping.

You should not allow people who do not have an essential need to be in the home to visit while you are in isolation.

Note: You can leave your home to seek medical care or because of an emergency.

Can I go into the garden or go for a walk?

You can go into your private garden or courtyard or onto your private balcony if you have one.

You cannot leave your home unless it is to seek medical care or because of an emergency.

Separate yourself from the other people in your home

If you are sharing your home with others you should, as much as possible:

- remain separated from others
- wear a surgical mask when you are in the same room as another person
- use a separate bathroom, if available
- avoid shared or communal areas and wear a surgical mask when moving through these areas
- not share a room with people who are at risk of severe disease, such as elderly people, immunocompromised people, and those who have heart, lung or kidney conditions, and diabetes.

Wear a surgical mask

You should wear a surgical mask when you are in the same room with other people (even if they are also in isolation) and when you visit a healthcare provider.

Make sure your surgical mask covers your nose and mouth at all times, and avoid touching your mask unnecessarily.

Cover coughs and sneezes

You should cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or cough or sneeze into your sleeve or elbow. Used tissues should be placed in a bin, and hands immediately washed with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

Wash your hands

You should wash your hands often and thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. You can use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser if your hands are not visibly dirty. Ensure you wash your hands or use a hand sanitiser:

- before entering an area where there are other people
- before touching things used by other people
- after using the bathroom
- after coughing or sneezing
- before putting on, and after removing, gloves and masks.

Avoid sharing household items

You should not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, bedding, or other items with other people in your home. After using these items, you should wash them thoroughly with soap and water or use a dishwasher/washing machine.

Isolation requirements for people who have tested negative

If you have been tested for COVID-19 and the result was negative you must still remain in isolation if you have been identified as a close contact of a person with confirmed COVID-19 while they were infectious. You must isolate yourself for 14 days after your last contact with that person. You must also remain in isolation if you have not yet completed your 14 day isolation after returning from overseas travel.

Do the members of my household need to self-isolate whilst I'm waiting on my test result?

No. Household contacts of suspect cases do not need to be in isolation.

Prevention steps for caregivers and household members of suspected cases

There should only be people in the home who are essential for providing care for the person who is under isolation and those who cannot find alternative accommodation.

Caregivers and household members should follow this advice to reduce their risk of infection.

Monitor symptoms

If you are a caregiver or household member you should monitor yourself for any symptoms. Watch particularly for:

- fever (37.5° or higher) or history of fever (night sweats, chills)
- cough
- shortness of breath (difficulty breathing)
- sore throat
- loss of smell
- loss of taste.

Other reported symptoms of COVID-19 include fatigue, runny nose, muscle pain, joint pain, diarrhoea, nausea/vomiting and loss of appetite.

If you develop symptoms, you should seek help as soon as possible.

You have four main options:

- Call the healthdirect hotline on **1800 022 222**. When you call, tell them you are caring for a person with confirmed COVID-19.
- Call your local doctor to make an appointment, and tell them you are caring for a person with confirmed COVID-19.
- Visit your nearest COVID-19 clinic. When you arrive, immediately tell staff you are caring for a person with confirmed COVID-19.
- **If you become severely unwell and it's a medical emergency you should phone 000.** Tell the ambulance staff that you have been in caring for a person with confirmed COVID-19.

Note: If you go to see a doctor make sure you wear a surgical mask while you go there. You should travel directly to the doctor or COVID-19 clinic by private car (preferably) or taxi or ride-share but sitting in the back. Do not use public transport.

Wash your hands

Wash your hands often and thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. You can use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser if your hands are not visibly dirty. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. Always wash your hands before putting on and after taking off gloves and masks.

Wear a surgical mask

Wear a surgical mask and disposable gloves when you are in the same room as the person with confirmed infection, or when you touch or have contact with the person's blood, body fluids and/or secretions, such as sweat, saliva, sputum, nasal mucus, vomit, urine, or diarrhoea.

- Make sure your mask covers your nose and mouth at all times.
- Throw out disposable surgical masks and disposable gloves after use.
- Wash your hands immediately after removing the surgical mask and gloves.

Clean household surfaces

Clean all "high-touch" surfaces, such as counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables, at least once a day wearing disposable gloves. Also, clean any surfaces that may have blood, body fluids and/or secretions or excretions on them.

- Read labels of cleaning products and follow recommendations on product labels. Labels contain instructions for safe and effective use of the cleaning product including precautions you should take when applying the product, such as wearing gloves or aprons and making sure the areas is well ventilated when using the product.
- Use a household disinfectant or a diluted bleach solution on hard surfaces. To make a bleach solution at home, add 1 tablespoon of bleach to 4 cups of water.
- Wear a surgical mask and disposable gloves while handling soiled items. Wash your hands immediately after removing gloves and masks.
- Wash laundry thoroughly
- Immediately remove and wash clothes or bedding that have blood, body fluids and/or secretions or excretions on them.
- Read and follow directions on labels of laundry or clothing items and detergent. In general, wash and dry with the warmest temperatures recommended on the clothing label.
- Dishes should be washed in a dishwasher where possible.

Disposing of contaminated items

Place all used disposable gloves, surgical masks, and other contaminated items in a lined waste bin before disposing of them with other household waste. Wash your hands immediately after handling these items.

Tips for you and your family to help cope with home isolation

Being in home isolation can be frightening, particularly for young children. We've put together some tips for coping:

- Talk to the other members of the family about the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) to reduce anxiety. You can find accurate, up to date information on [NSW Health - COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\)](https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19) www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19
- Reassure young children using age-appropriate language.
- Keep up a normal daily routine as much as possible:
 - arrange with your employer to work from home
 - ask your child's school to supply assignments, work sheets and homework by post or email.
- 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 forever.
- Keep in touch with family members and friends via telephone, 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 it. Exercise is a proven treatment for stress and depression.
- Ask your family, friends or other members of the household to pick up your groceries and medicines for you. If this is not possible, you can order groceries and medicines (including prescription medicines) online or by telephone.
- Treat isolation as an opportunity to do some of those things you never usually have time for, such as board games, craft, drawing and reading.

Still have questions or need support while in isolation?

- [Lifeline Australia](https://www.lifeline.org.au): www.lifeline.org.au or **13 11 14**
A crisis support service that provides short term support at any time for people who are having difficulty coping or staying safe.
- [Kids Helpline](https://www.kidshelpline.com.au): www.kidshelpline.com.au or **1800 551800**
A free, private and confidential 24/7 phone and online counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25 years.
- NSW Mental Health Line: **1800 011 511**
Mental health crisis telephone service in NSW.
- Call the National Coronavirus Health Information line: **1800 020 080**

For more information

Visit [NSW Health - COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\)](https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19).
www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19