

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 three ways to know if you are a close contact:
 1. Someone in your home or who you have been near gets COVID-19
 2. You get a text or phone call from NSW Health telling you that you are a close contact
 3. 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 from other people for 14 days since you were exposed. You must 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 (who are secondary close contacts) to get tested and to isolate until they get a negative test result:
 - Everyone you share your home with
 - Everyone who has been in your home since you were exposed to COVID-19
 - Everyone whose home you have visited since you were exposed to COVID-19
 - Friends you have shared a confined space with, such as a car, since you were exposed to COVID-19.
 - If any of the secondary close contacts are a healthcare worker who needs to return to work before you (the close contact) receive a negative test result, please ask them to speak to their manager for a risk assessment.
- By law close contacts must to isolate themselves; self-isolation is required under the [Public Health \(COVID-19 Self Self-isolation\) Order](#), and penalties can apply if the Order is not followed.

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

What do I need to do?

Immediately isolate

All close contacts need to isolate, even if you currently feel well. Isolate means that you should be in a room away from other family or housemates. You cannot leave the residence unless for medical emergencies or other emergencies. Do not stop on your way home.

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 self-isolation until your self-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 self-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 self-isolation for 24 days after your last contact with the infectious person.

Notify people who have been near to you

Let the following people know that they are a secondary close contact, and that they should get tested and isolate until you both receive a negative result;

- Everyone you share your home with
- Everyone who has been in your home since you were exposed to COVID-19
- Everyone whose home you have visited since you were exposed to COVID-19
- Friends who you have shared a confined space with, such as a car, since you were exposed to COVID-19.

You should keep separate from these people at all times. Please ask them to read the [Advice for secondary close contacts](#) and follow the requirements.

How do I isolate?

- Self-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 home or accommodation unless they usually live at the premises, or they are entering for medical or emergency purposes.
- Self-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 self-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 self-isolation for your entire Self-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 are 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 self-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 self-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-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 self-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 self-isolation period. Please call 1300 066 055.

If you live with others who you cannot isolate separately from (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 self-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 self-isolation won't last for ever.
- NSW Health has partnered with Sonder to provide a personal wellbeing service, available to help support you. The app provides access to 24/7 multilingual chat & phone access to a range of mental health, medical and wellbeing support services. You can [download the Sonder app](#) for free.

When can I leave self-isolation?

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

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

What happens if I don't follow self-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 self-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 self-isolation:

- [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.
- [Beyond Blue Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service](#): 1800 512 348
- Sonder 24 hour personal wellbeing app, download the app for free at [Sonder Safe](#).
- [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.
- NSW Mental Health Line: 1800 011 511
Mental health crisis telephone service in NSW.
- National Coronavirus Health Information line: 1800 020 080
- Visit [NSW Health - COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\)](#)