

NSW Health COVID-19 self-isolation guideline



The self-isolation guideline provides information on how to self-isolate effectively and is one of the most important ways to stop the spread of COVID-19. The guideline is supplementary to the current [Public Health \(COVID-19 Self-Isolation\) Order](#) and should be read in conjunction with the Order.

In addition, a range of [factsheets](#) providing tailored advice for specific groups of people are available and can be read together with the Guideline:

- [confirmed cases](#),
- [close contacts](#),
- [people in hotel quarantine](#),
- [parents and guardians of unaccompanied minors arriving from overseas](#),
- [people exempted from hotel quarantine](#).

What is self-isolation?

Self-isolation means you must stay at your home or accommodation and remain separated from others. You cannot leave your house or accommodation, unless for medical care or a permitted purpose. Someone from NSW Health will call you to discuss your living arrangements and whether you can self-isolate effectively.

How do I get to my accommodation?

You must travel directly to the place where you will undertake self-isolation and not stop at any location. You should travel by private car (including a rental vehicle) if you live up to 3-4 hours' drive away.

If you are travelling a longer distance, or are unable to access a private car, you must call your local Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055 for advice and assistance to determine the options available to you.

What if I live with other people?

If you have COVID-19, you cannot share a house unless you can keep completely separate from other people. Your accommodation must have:

1. a granny flat (separate self-contained unit), or
2. a self-contained floor or wing of a house with a separate bedroom, bathroom and kitchen, or
3. a bedroom with internal access to an ensuite bathroom where meals can be left outside the bedroom door.

If you do not have COVID-19, but are a close or casual contact of a case, it is still ideal to self-isolate separately, even if other household members have had the same exposure. It may be possible for members of your household to stay at home during your self-isolation period as long as they do not share a room with you. If there are members of your household who are elderly, immunocompromised or have chronic illnesses such as heart, lung or kidney conditions, extra precautions may need to be taken to protect them.

If you are at your home and are sharing a house with others, avoid walking through common areas. If you must go through a common area to get to a private garden or balcony, ensure that no one else is in the common area, and wear a surgical mask at all times.

Your Public Health Unit can advise and support close contacts to find appropriate accommodation or assist your household members to find alternative accommodation while you are isolating at home.

Public Health Units can also assess people who are unable to isolate from other household members (such as parents and young children, carers, etc.). In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for certain household members to isolate together, provided they acknowledge there is an increased risk of infection, and that the presentation of symptoms among any person will necessitate a further 14 days of isolation from the date of symptom onset.

How do I practice safe self-isolation in shared residence?

Use of surgical masks

You should not be in the same room as another person, however if you need to provide care (for example, to a child), you must wear a surgical mask whilst doing so. Make sure your mask covers your nose and mouth at all times and avoid touching your mask unnecessarily (cloth masks are not recommended). Please see [how to wear a mask correctly](https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/face-masks#how-to-wear-a-mask-correctly) at <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/face-masks#how-to-wear-a-mask-correctly>.

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 cleaned immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or alcohol-based hand sanitiser.

Wash your hands carefully

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 hand sanitiser:

- before and after touching things that may be touched by other people e.g. door handles
- after using the bathroom
- after coughing or sneezing
- before putting on, and after removing, gloves and masks.

Do not share household items

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

Clean household surfaces regularly

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. After cleaning, apply a household disinfectant or diluted bleach solution. To make a bleach solution at home, add 1 tablespoon of bleach to 4 cups of water. Ensure you follow the safety instructions on the bottle.

For further information on cleaning see NSW Health [COVID-19 fact sheets and brochures](https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/factsheets-brochures.aspx) at www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/factsheets-brochures.aspx.

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

You must be alert to any new symptoms. Watch particularly for:

- fever (37.5°C or higher if measured) or feeling hot, or night sweats or chills
- cough
- runny nose
- shortness of breath (difficulty breathing)
- sore throat

- loss of smell
- loss of taste

Other reported symptoms of COVID-19 include tiredness, blocked nose (congestion), muscle pain, joint pain, headache, diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, unexplained chest pain and conjunctivitis.

If you develop symptoms, you must get tested and continue to self-isolate. For a full list of symptoms, COVID-19 clinics and information on how to get tested visit [NSW Government](https://nsw.gov.au/covid-19) at nsw.gov.au/covid-19.

If you become severely unwell and it is a medical emergency, you should phone Triple Zero 000. Tell the ambulance staff that you are in self-isolation due to COVID-19.

Can I leave my accommodation?

Self-isolation means you must stay at your home or accommodation and not attend any activities outside of your isolation location. You cannot go to work, school, childcare, university, recreation facilities, public areas or go shopping. If you are staying in a hotel or motel, you should not leave your room; you can go onto your private balcony if you have one provided it's not shared with others.

You can leave your home to seek medical care or because of an emergency (including to avoid injury or escape a risk of harm from domestic violence). If you are required to leave for a permitted reason, you should wear a surgical mask, maintain a distance from others (minimum of 1.5 metres) and travel directly to and from the location. You should travel by private car, or contact your local [Public Health Unit](#) at **1300 066 055** for transport advice.

Can I have visitors?

No. People who are not providing an essential need such as essential care or emergency maintenance should not be in your home or accommodation while you are in isolation.

How can I obtain food and other essential supplies?

Ask your family, friends or other members of the household to pick up groceries and medicines for you. If this is not possible, you may be able to order groceries, medicines and prescription medicines online or by telephone. If you are staying in hotel accommodation, any food ordered through a food delivery service can be delivered to you in accordance with the hotel's policy. Make sure deliveries are left outside your door and that you only open your door after the person delivering the items has left. If you still need help with obtaining food and essential supplies, call your local Public Health Unit at 1300 066 055.

When can I leave self-isolation?

The length of time you need to self-isolate is generally 14 days since you were last exposed to someone with COVID-19 but may depend on a number of factors. NSW Health will contact you when you start self-isolation to inform you of your requirements.

What happens if you don't comply with self-isolation?

Not following these guidelines puts family, friends and the community at risk. 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.

More information and support

- [Lifeline Australia](https://www.lifeline.org.au/): 13 11 14 or <https://www.lifeline.org.au/>

A crisis support service that provides short term support at any time for people who are having difficulty coping or staying safe.

- NSW Mental Health Line: 1800 011 511

Mental health crisis telephone service in NSW.

- [Kids Helpline](https://www.kidshelpline.com.au/): 1800 551800 or <https://www.kidshelpline.com.au/>

A free, private and confidential 24/7 phone and online counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25 years.

- The National Coronavirus Health Information line: 1800 020 080
- [NSW Health COVID-19](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/covid-19) or www.health.nsw.gov.au/covid-19
- [COVID-19 Factsheets and Brochures](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/factsheets-brochures.aspx) or www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/factsheets-brochures.aspx
- [CDNA National Guidelines for Public Health Units](http://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/cdna-song-novel-coronavirus.htm) or www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/cdna-song-novel-coronavirus.htm