

COVID-19: Home isolation for Patients Factsheet

Updated 2nd September 2020

To help slow the spread of COVID-19, some groups are being asked by public health professionals to self-isolate or home-isolate. This includes people who have **been tested for COVID-19** while they wait for results and people who are confirmed cases of COVID-19 but are well enough to stay at home.

If you get flu-like symptoms, you should get a test and stay at home until your Covid-19 test result. If the result is negative (and you're not a close contact) you can leave isolation. If your result is positive, you should follow public health instructions, which is usually self-isolation for 14 days.

This factsheet explains what home-isolation means and what you can do to help protect yourself, your family and your community and reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Home-isolation is different from social distancing, which includes activities everyone in the Community can do to help slow the spread of COVID-19. For more information go to the NSW Health [website](#).

What is COVID-19?

- COVID-19 is a new coronavirus first seen in China. It has now spread globally.
- COVID-19 spreads mainly from person-to-person contact, or from the droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes and through contaminated hands, objects and surfaces.
- There is currently no vaccine or treatment for COVID-19

If you are showing any symptoms of COVID-19 including fever, cough, sore throat or shortness of breath it is important to get tested at your local COVID-19 testing clinic. Click [here](#) to locate your closest testing clinic.

What does self-isolation or home-isolation mean?

- This means **staying at home** until you receive a confirmed negative result on your COVID-19 test.
- This means **not going** to work, school, university, day care or any public areas.
- This means **not going** out to buy groceries or medications. Instead, you should ask friends or family to drop things off for you.
- This means **keeping as much distance** as possible between yourself and other family members in your home.
- You **should not use** public transport, taxis or ride-sharing services.
- You should watch out for any severe symptoms of COVID-19, like difficulty breathing, in yourself and the start of any COVID-19 symptoms in your family and people who live with you.

Can I still see a doctor?

Yes, you can still arrange to see your doctor!

- If it is a medical emergency (e.g. feeling shortness of breath when you are resting), you should **call 000** and tell the ambulance you are in home-isolation for COVID-19.

- If the symptoms are less serious you can:
 - o Call ahead before visiting your AMS or local doctor. This will help them plan the best care for you.
 - o Visit a COVID-19 Respiratory Clinic or Emergency Department at your local Hospital. When you arrive tell them you have been in home-isolation for COVID-19.

How do I home-isolate when I live with other people?

Even if you are feeling well, you may still be infectious. People with COVID-19 can be infectious from before their symptoms begin and after they feel better. It is important that you take care to avoid spread to other members of your household.

The local public health unit can investigate options for alternate accommodation if you can't separate yourself from other people in your house. Phone: 1300 066 055 for more information.

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

- Wash your hands properly with soap and water or hand sanitizer for at least 20 seconds. Wash your hands often throughout the day. Key moments include:
 - o Before entering an area with other people
 - o Before touching items used by others
 - o Before and after putting on face masks
 - o After using the bathroom
 - o After coughing or sneezing
 - o After touching your face
- **Cough and sneeze safely** into your elbow or a tissue. Put used tissues into the bin and wash your hands straight away.
- Keep separate from others in the household. You should **stay in one room**. Families might have to rearrange the household during this time and support you to by bringing meals to your room.
- Make sure you do not share a room with people who are at risk of more serious illness, such as Elders and people living with health problems.
- Even if you are feeling well **wear a surgical mask** when in a room with other people. Wear the mask properly by covering your nose and mouth at all times and avoid touching the mask.
- **Avoid shared or communal areas**, like the kitchen or living areas, and wear a surgical mask when moving through these spaces. You should wash your hands when leaving your room to go to the kitchen or another shared space.
- **Avoid sharing household items**. You should not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, cutlery, towels, bedding or other household items. After using these items you should wash them thoroughly with soap and hot water.
- Use a **separate bathroom**, if available, or have your own **separate towel** for handwashing and bathing. Keep track by having a different coloured towel or keeping it apart from everyone else's.
- **Avoid having visitors** come over while you are in isolation.
- Keep as much distance between yourself and others as possible. When saying hello and goodbye to your mob, wave instead of hugging, kissing or shaking hands.

For more information on getting your household COVID-19 Ready, or to make an action plan, click [here](#).

If you are the person caring for someone in isolation, you should:

- **Wash your hands properly and often.** Key moments include: after you have touched any item the unwell person has touched, like the plates that the person ate off; after taking off gloves and masks for cleaning.
- **Wear a surgical mask** when you are in the same room as the person who is unwell, or when you touch or have contact with the person's body fluids (body fluids include: blood, sweat, saliva, mucus, vomit, urine, diarrhoea).
- **Clean household surfaces.** Places people touch often, like door handles, benches, phones and in the bathroom should be cleaned at least once a day. You should wear disposable gloves and a surgical mask when cleaning or handling items soiled with body fluids from the person who is unwell. You can use household cleaning products according to their instructions. For hard surfaces, use a household disinfectant or diluted bleach solution (1 tablespoon of bleach to 4 cups of water).
- **Wash laundry thoroughly.** Immediately remove and wash clothes or bedding that have body fluids on them. In general, wash and dry at the warmest temperature recommended on the clothing or fabric label. If you don't have access to hot water or a drier, hang items in the sun until completely dry.
- Dishes should be washed with **soap and hot water**, use a dishwasher if you have one.
- Place all used disposable gloves, surgical masks and other contaminated items (e.g. used tissues) in a plastic bag before throwing it out with other household rubbish.

Stay connected and look after yourself

- Ask a friend or family member to be on call and ready to help while you have to stay home.
- Being away from your family and community can be hard, so having someone to have a yarn with over the phone or video calling one another is important for your wellbeing. Make sure you reach out to one of your mob or call lifeline on 13 11 14 or beyond blue on 1300 22 4636 for free confidential counselling.
- It's ok to reach out for help getting groceries, medicines and other essentials. The best thing you can do to protect community is to stay at home and let others pick things up for you and drop them off at your door.
- Keep up a normal routine as much as possible. Ask your kid's school for lessons and homework so they can keep learning from home.
- Exercise regularly at home. Walking around your backyard, painting, singing and dancing can help relieve stress.