

Information for people exposed to COVID-19

How will I know if I have been exposed to COVID-19?

COVID-19 is common in the community. We ask people with COVID-19 to tell the people they have spent time with from the 2 days before they started having symptoms or 2 days before they tested positive (whichever came first) that they have COVID-19.

If you are told by someone that you have been in contact with a person with COVID-19, use this advice to understand your risk and what you can do to protect yourself, your family and your community.

Who is at risk of getting infected?

The risk of infection with COVID-19 increases:

- with the amount of time you spend with someone who has COVID-19 and how closely you interacted with them
- when you are indoors (the risk is lower if you are outdoors)
- when you don't wear a mask (the risk is much lower if the person you are with also wears a mask).

Vaccination decreases the risk of getting COVID-19, but this protection reduces over time and can be less effective against certain variants of COVID-19, such as Omicron. Booster doses significantly help increase this protection, including for the Omicron variant. Vaccination is also important in protecting against severe illness. Everyone should get their booster as soon as they are eligible.

To book your COVID-19 vaccination please visit the [COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic Finder](#).

How long am I at risk for?

After being exposed to someone with COVID-19 you are at risk of illness for 14 days. Most people who develop COVID-19 will get it in the first 7 days as this is when you are most likely to develop symptoms if you did pick up the virus from your exposure. However, approximately 25% of cases will develop COVID-19 between day 7 and 14.

What should I do if I have been exposed to someone who has COVID-19?

Your risk of getting COVID-19 will be based on the type of contact you had with a person who has COVID-19. When thinking about your testing and isolation requirements, think about your circumstances, including the risk you could infect vulnerable people you live or work with.

All people exposed to someone with COVID-19 should watch carefully for [symptoms](#). If symptoms occur, have a test immediately. See the table below for more information on what to do next.

What are my legal requirements?

If you live with someone who has COVID-19 then you must follow the [NSW Health Self Isolation Guidelines](#) and self-isolate for 7 days. You must also follow the NSW Health Self-Isolation Guidelines for 7 days if you have been notified to do this by NSW Health.

If you were exposed to someone with outside of your household, please assess your risk using the table below. Consider the nature of your contact with the person with COVID-19 and your own personal circumstances, such as the risk that you could infect the people you live or work with, especially if they have conditions that make them more susceptible (for example, chronic illness, or on chemotherapy).

You do not need to test or self-isolate if you have had COVID-19 and been released from self-isolation in the last 12 weeks. For further information, see the [testing positive factsheet](#)

What are some examples of high and low risk exposures?

Use this table to assess your risk of COVID-19, and what to do, if you are told you are a contact of someone with COVID-19.

About you	Risk of COVID-19	What do I need to do?
I live with someone who has COVID-19 (I am a household contact)	High	<p>All household contacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must follow the self-isolation guideline and self-isolate for 7 days from the time the first COVID-positive person in your household had their test. • Should have a rapid antigen test as soon as possible and again on Day 6. Have an additional rapid antigen test if you develop symptoms. • If you have symptoms and are at higher risk of severe illness* from COVID-19, please have a PCR test as it is more accurate and means you can be assessed for treatment faster. • If all tests are negative, you can leave self-isolation after 7 days. • The risk of developing COVID-19 is high for 14 days after exposure, therefore, for 7 days after leaving self-isolation you should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – avoid high-risk settings (healthcare, aged care, disability care, correctional facilities) – wear a mask in indoor non-residential settings – monitor for symptoms and get a PCR test immediately if you develop symptoms – avoid crowded venues and work from home where possible • You do not need to repeat self-isolation if another person in your household tests positive during your 7 days self-isolation or in the 14 days after your isolation period ends • If another person in your household tests positive for COVID-19 more than 14 days after your self-isolation period ends, you will have to self-isolate again and follow the instructions for household contacts of people with COVID-19. <p>If you get a positive result at any time, you should continue your isolation and follow the Testing positive to COVID-19 and managing COVID-19 safely at home advice.</p> <p>For more information on COVID-19 testing, see What COVID-19 test should I do?.</p>
I spent a long time with someone who has COVID-19 (e.g. I stayed overnight at their house or I spent the evening indoors at the house) or I interacted closely with someone who has COVID-19 and we were not wearing masks (e.g. we drove a long	High	<p>Self-isolation for 7 days from the last time you were in contact with the person with COVID-19 is the most effective way of protecting others.</p> <p>Have a rapid antigen test as soon as possible and again on Day 6. Have an additional rapid antigen test if you develop symptoms (or a PCR test if you are at higher risk of severe illness*). If all tests are negative, you can leave self-isolation after 7 days. For a further 7 days after leaving self-isolation, you can help prevent spread of COVID-19 by following the recommendations under How can we all help slow the spread of COVID-19?</p>

distance together, or I looked after children who are now positive.)		<p>If you get a positive test result, you should self-isolate for 7 days from the date you had your positive test taken and follow the advice for people testing positive to COVID-19 and managing COVID-19 safely at home.</p> <p>For more information on COVID-19 testing, see What COVID-19 test should I do?.</p>
I spent some time with a person who has COVID-19 (e.g. we had dinner together or met at a pub, club or other social function.)	Moderate	<p>It is recommended that you have a rapid antigen test as soon as possible and follow the advice for rapid antigen testing in the factsheet - What COVID-19 test should i do? .</p> <p>If your test is negative and you have no symptoms, you do not need to self-isolate. You should have a second rapid antigen test on Day 6. Also have a rapid antigen test immediately if symptoms occur (or a PCR test if you are at higher risk of severe illness*).</p>
I had brief or distanced contact with a person with COVID-19 (e.g. I dropped off shopping, or we went for a walk outdoors), or I received a case alert in the Service NSW App.	Low	<p>Monitor for symptoms.</p> <p>If symptoms occur, have a rapid antigen test immediately. If your rapid antigen test is negative, self-isolate and do another rapid antigen test in 24 hours, or get a PCR test and self-isolate while you wait for your result. If your second test is negative, stay in self-isolation until your symptoms have gone. If you get a positive result, you should continue your isolation and follow the Testing positive to COVID-19 and managing COVID-19 safely at home advice</p> <p>If you have symptoms and are at higher risk of severe illness*, have a PCR test.</p>

* *People at higher risk of severe illness include people aged 60 years and older, pregnant women, Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Pacific Islander people (from age 35 years and over), people with obesity, diabetes, serious cardiovascular disease, chronic lung disease, severe chronic liver or kidney disease, active cancer or who are immunocompromised, some people with a disability including those with a disability that affects their lungs, heart or immune system, residents of aged care and disability care facilities, and people aged 18 years and older who are unvaccinated.*

If you need to get tested and cannot access a rapid antigen test, you can get a test at a [testing clinic](#). For additional information for workplace-based exposures refer to [NSW Government - Guidance for businesses with a worker who tests positive for COVID-19](#). There are some circumstances where critical workers who are household contacts are permitted to leave self-isolation to attend work, see the [exemption guidance](#) for further information.

How can we all help slow the spread of COVID-19?

There are simple steps we can all take to help slow the spread of COVID-19.

- Don't go anywhere if you are sick. Get tested immediately and self-isolate until you receive a negative result.
- If you are in the moderate or high exposure category, do not visit high-risk settings (healthcare, aged care, disability care, correctional facilities); if you are in the low exposure category and you need to visit one of these settings, we encourage you to do a rapid antigen test just beforehand and wear a mask while visiting.
- Stay 1.5 metres away from other people where possible and avoid crowds
- Wear a mask
- Clean your hands regularly with hand sanitiser or soap and running water for 20 seconds
- Hold social gatherings outdoors, with limited numbers
- Check in to venues using QR codes where these are available.

Where can I find advice on supports available while I am in self-isolation?

For further information on supports available, see the [Self-Isolation Guideline](#).

Help in your language

If you need an interpreter, please contact the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) National on 131 450. This service is free and confidential.