

# Health information for cruise ship passengers



June 2022

There are a number of health risks related to international and domestic cruises. This includes risks while you are on board the vessel, as well as at your destination.

## Outbreaks of infectious diseases are very likely

Viruses spread easily and quickly between people interacting closely together, especially in indoor areas. Going on a cruise ship increases your chance of exposure to COVID-19, influenza, acute gastroenteritis (gastro) and other infectious diseases.

While cruise ships have plans in place to reduce passengers' risk, these measures may not prevent outbreaks. If there is a COVID-19 outbreak, you may be required to self-isolate in your cabin and follow health advice, and your journey may be impacted.

## COVID-19 and influenza (flu) can cause serious illness and death

If you are at [higher risk of severe illness](#) (e.g. if you are over 60 years of age, have a chronic health condition, or are pregnant or immunocompromised) and have decided to go on a cruise, it is important you speak with your doctor to discuss:

- The risks that are involved
- Medications you may need
- Necessary vaccinations including COVID-19 and flu
- A care plan that covers what you need to do if you develop COVID-19 or flu (including what tests and medications you need)
- Travel vaccinations or medications you may need depending on your destination port(s).

If you test positive to COVID-19 on a cruise ship, you might need to take antiviral medication, or you might need to be transferred from the cruise ship to a hospital at the nearest port for urgent care. Make sure you understand what will happen if you become sick. Speak to your cruise operator or travel agent if you have questions.

## You should NOT travel on a cruise ship if you:

- Have any symptoms of COVID-19
- Have tested positive for COVID-19 in the week before your trip. You must self-isolate at home for 7 days and follow the NSW Health [Testing Positive to COVID-19 and Managing COVID-19 Safely at Home](#) advice.

If you are a household or close contact of someone who had COVID-19 in the last 7 days, you must follow the [NSW Health Household and Close Contact Guidelines](#). You are at high risk of getting COVID-19 and should seek advice from your cruise ship or travel agent before boarding. They may ask you to take additional precautions (such as regular testing for COVID-19) or ask you to defer your cruise.

## Check with your cruise operator or travel agent to understand if there is anything you need to know or do before boarding

In NSW, cruise operators should comply with the [Eastern Seaboard Protocols](#). This includes requirements for passengers to:

- Be vaccinated for COVID-19 if they are over 12 years of age
- Undergo testing and health screening before boarding the cruise
- Wear masks when boarding and disembarking the cruise
- Self-isolate for at least 7 days if they test positive to COVID-19 or are a close contact of someone with COVID-19 during the cruise.

Additional restrictions may be put in place depending on the risks of COVID-19 and influenza at any time.



## Passenger Checklist

The checklist below will help you to prepare for your trip. We recommend ticking off each item below before going on your cruise.

### Before choosing a cruise/buying a ticket:

- Talk to your doctor about your health before going on a cruise, particularly if you are immunocompromised, over 60 years of age, or are otherwise at [higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19](#) and flu.
  - Talk about whether you should travel or whether you need to take any additional precautions before or during your trip.
  - Ask what medications you might need to take with you.
  - Develop a care plan so you understand what you need to do if you get COVID-19 or flu while on your trip.
- Make sure you understand the risks involved and ask the cruise operator what will happen if there's an outbreak of COVID-19 or other infectious diseases (e.g., flu and gastroenteritis) while on board:
  - How you can access free medical care and antiviral medication if you test positive to COVID-19
  - How the outbreak will be managed
  - What will happen if you test positive to COVID-19 or are exposed to someone with COVID-19 during your trip.
- Get your COVID-19, flu and travel vaccinations, including any COVID-19 booster doses if eligible. Your doctor may recommend other vaccinations for your destination port(s).
- Understand what happens if you become unwell on a cruise ship and need additional medical care which might not be available on board. There may be significant additional costs and charges if you need to seek urgent medical care. Consider whether you need travel insurance that covers emergency healthcare in your destination port(s).

### Before boarding:

- Get tested for COVID-19. Refer to the cruise operator or your travel agent for more details on pre-departure testing requirements. If you test positive, you must self-isolate for 7 days and cannot travel.
- Pack any medication given to you by your doctor, as well as masks and hand sanitiser for the trip.
- Do not board if you test positive to COVID-19 in the week before your trip, or you have any respiratory or gastro symptoms, including fever.
- If you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 in the last 7 days check with your cruise operator or travel agent if there is anything you need to do before boarding.
- Wear a mask when boarding the vessel (as well as when disembarking at the end of your journey).

### When on board:

- Try to physically distance from people you are not travelling with (stay at least 1.5 metres apart).
- Wear a mask when you cannot remain distanced from others, particularly while indoors.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water and use hand sanitiser.
- If you develop any COVID-19 or gastro symptoms, even if mild, stay in your cabin and tell the onboard medical centre or a crew member immediately.

### After your cruise:

- Monitor for symptoms of COVID-19. If you develop any, get tested immediately and self-isolate until you receive a negative result. A test 3-5 days after your trip is recommended to identify early infection.
- Consider who you visit in the 14 days after your cruise. Reduce the risk you may present to people at [higher risk of severe illness](#) by avoiding contact. If you have someone at home at higher risk of severe illness, think about ways that you can remain separate for the next 14 days.
- Follow the recommendations in the [COVID-19 Information for International Arrivals](#) factsheet if you are entering NSW on an international cruise (this includes voyages that start in Australia and visit another country before returning).