

Advice for people exposed to COVID-19

COVID-19 is currently circulating in the community. There are simple steps you can take to protect yourself and others around you.

If you have been exposed to COVID-19, it is especially important you follow these steps to keep others safe.

If you are at [higher risk of severe illness](#), speak to your doctor now about what you should do if you become unwell, including whether your doctor recommends that you have antiviral medicines.

What should I do?

There are simple steps you can take to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 to others:

- **Monitor for symptoms.** If you have or develop cold or flu symptoms (runny nose, sore throat, cough, fever), stay home and get [tested for COVID-19](#). If your test result is positive, follow the [testing positive to COVID-19 and managing COVID-19 safely at home](#) advice. If your test result is negative, stay home until your symptoms have gone.
- **Wear a mask** indoors, including on public transport
- **Maintain physical distancing** where possible and get together outdoors or in well-ventilated indoor areas
- Stay up to date with your vaccinations
- Regularly **wash your hands**.
- Consider doing a rapid antigen test before visiting people at higher risk of severe illness.

What should I do if I live with or spent a long time with someone who has COVID-19?

If you live with or have spent a long time with a person with COVID-19, you are at higher risk of getting infected (e.g., you spent the evening indoors with them, drove a long distance together or you looked after children who are now positive). **In addition to [the steps above](#)**, you should:

- **Test regularly for at least 7 days**, even if you do not develop symptoms. This is very important if you are at higher risk of severe illness or are in contact with [people at higher risk of severe illness](#).
- **Avoid visiting high-risk settings** such as a hospital, aged or disability care facilities, or visiting [people at high risk of severe illness](#) for at least 7 days. If you have to visit, have a rapid antigen test before you go and wear a mask.
- **Talk to your employer** about when you should return to your workplace. This is particularly important if you work in a high risk setting such as health, disability and aged care. Consider working from home where possible.

How long am I at risk for?

After being exposed to someone with COVID-19 you are at risk of getting COVID-19 for up to 14 days. Most people who develop COVID-19 will get symptoms in the first 7 days, however some people will develop symptoms between 7 and 14 days. Some people with COVID-19 do not develop symptoms at all but may still infect others.

Who is at higher risk of severe illness?

Some people are at higher risk of severe illness (more likely to get very sick, and may be at higher risk of needing hospital care), including:

- People aged 70 years and older
- People aged over 50 years with additional risk factors including obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, chronic lung disease (including moderate or severe asthma requiring inhaled steroids), neurological disease, severe chronic liver or kidney disease, active cancer or those who are not up to date with recommended vaccination
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 30 years and over with additional risk factors listed above
- People who are moderately to severely immunocompromised of any age
- People with significant or complex disability
- Pregnant women
- Children with complex chronic conditions

If you live in a remote area and have reduced access to healthcare or are a resident in an aged care or disability care facility, discuss your risk with your GP as you may also be eligible for antiviral treatment or additional supportive care.

I am at higher risk of severe illness, what should I do?

If you are at higher risk of severe illness and have been exposed to someone who has COVID-19:

- Speak to your doctor now about what you should do if you become unwell, including whether your doctor recommends that you have antiviral medicines, what test you should get if you get sick, and whether you need a pathology form for the test. Antiviral medicines work best when used as soon as symptoms start.
- Get a PCR test if you have cold or flu symptoms (runny nose, sore throat, cough, fever), or live with someone who has tested positive to COVID-19. A PCR test is recommended as they are more accurate. If you cannot get a PCR test result quickly, do a rapid antigen test while you wait for the PCR.
- Wear a mask in public. This can help reduce your risk of COVID-19 exposure.

What if I have recently recovered from COVID-19?

If you have had COVID-19 in the past 4 weeks your risk of getting COVID-19 again is low.

If you have any new [symptoms](#) in the 4 weeks since you have recovered, stay home until they have gone. If you are at a [higher risk of severe illness](#) and have symptoms, speak to your doctor as they may recommend further testing including testing for other respiratory viruses.

For further information, see the [Testing positive to COVID-19 and managing COVID-19 safely at home](#) fact sheet.

More information:

For more information about testing for COVID-19, visit [What COVID-19 test should I do?](#)

Help in your language

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