

FAQ

What you need to do if you have tested positive for COVID-19

KEEP IT

COVID
safe

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Important information for people who have COVID-19 and are isolating at home.

If any of this information is not clear to you, please call the Public Health Hotline on 1800 671 738.

What is COVID-19?

You will have received a message from the laboratory or Public Health that says you have tested positive for COVID-19 or you have tested positive with a Rapid Antigen Test.

COVID-19 is the disease caused by a coronavirus that was first identified in 2019. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that typically cause common colds. Most people with COVID-19 have a mild illness and make a full recovery.

Even if you have a mild illness, you can still spread the virus to others who could get very sick and need care in hospital. Serious illness can sometimes cause death.

There are some new treatments for people at risk of severe disease with COVID-19. Your health provider may talk to you about this if you might benefit from these treatments.

What is a confirmed case?

A confirmed case is someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

Being a confirmed case means you have the virus and, while infectious, can spread it to other people.

What do I need to do?

You must stay away from other people. This is called being in isolation.

To protect others, you must not leave your place of isolation unless you are instructed to by emergency services (police, fire, SES or ambulance), Public Health Services, or you need urgent medical care. See more information over the page about seeing a doctor.

You must not go to public places, work, shops, the pharmacy, school, or childcare. You must not visit anyone. You must not have visitors.

The only people who should enter your home are the people who stay with you (they are close contacts and required to quarantine), people providing medical or home-care, and emergency service personnel (including police, fire, SES, or ambulance officers) in an emergency situation.

Can I go outside?

If you are isolating in a house with its own private garden/courtyard, you can go outside to your garden/courtyard.

If you are isolating in an apartment you can go onto your private balcony if you have one.

What if I get worse?

If you get worse, don't wait. Phone your doctor or COVID@home on **1800 973 363**. If you start to feel very unwell or it gets hard to breathe, call **000** for an ambulance. Tell them you have COVID-19.

How does COVID-19 spread?

COVID-19 spreads easily from person to person, mostly through:

- close contact with an infectious person, including 48 hours before they have symptoms
- droplets from an infected person's cough or sneeze
- touching objects or surfaces (like doorknobs or tables) that have droplets from an infected person, and then touching your mouth or face.

What are the symptoms?

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are:

- fever (including chills, night sweats)
- runny nose
- shortness of breath
- sore/itchy throat
- cough
- shortness of breath
- loss of taste or smell.

COVID-19 can also cause headaches, muscle/joint pain, nausea (feeling sick), vomiting, diarrhoea (upset tummy), loss of appetite and fatigue (extreme tiredness).

When can I leave isolation?

Public Health Services, your GP or COVID@home will advise you when you can to leave isolation without putting other people at risk. Public Health will send you formal advice by email, text message, or letter to let you know that you can leave isolation.

How soon you can leave isolation will depend on how sick you've been and whether you needed hospital care.

If your symptoms have resolved, you can leave isolation 7 days after you had your test for COVID-19. If you have any ongoing symptoms you should isolate for 10 days after you had your test. If you are immunocompromised please talk to your treating doctor for when it is safe to leave isolation.

If your employer, school, or university asks for a medical certificate, ask your doctor (GP) for one or you can use your Release from Isolation letter.

What if I need to see a doctor about something else?

If you need to see a doctor about another health condition, phone to make an appointment with your normal GP. Tell them you have COVID-19. They will arrange a telehealth appointment. You cannot go to the appointment in person. For after-hours medical services, information is available on the after-hours website ([tasafterhours.com](https://www.tasafterhours.com)) or you can call Healthdirect on 1800 022 222.

If you already have an appointment to see a doctor or other health professional (for example a midwife or specialist), phone them as soon as you can and tell them you have COVID-19. They will tell you if a telephone appointment is suitable or if the appointment can be delayed.

If your appointment cannot be delayed safely and the doctor or other health professional agrees to see you in person, you need to discuss this with Public Health. If approved, they will talk with you about how to protect others, including:

- traveling by private car and going directly to and from your appointment
- wearing a facemask and keeping at least 1.5 metres from other people when you can
- washing (and drying) your hands well with soap and running water before leaving home, and using alcohol-based hand rub to keep your hands clean while you are out
- minimising the surfaces you touch while you are out.

What if I need more food or medicine?

If you need more food or general household supplies, ask a friend, neighbour, or family member to help. Tell them to leave supplies on your doorstep rather than come into your home.

If you arrange a food delivery service, tell them to leave the delivery outside your house. Keep at least 1.5 metres (two or three large steps) from the delivery person.

If you need a prescription filled, arrange this with your usual pharmacist or GP. Ask if your pharmacy has a delivery service or ask a friend or family member to collect the medication for you.

If you don't have someone to help you, call the Public Health Hotline on 1800 671 738.

What should I do about cleaning and rubbish?

Cleaning

Clean frequently touched surfaces at least daily.

This includes bench/tabletops, doorknobs, sink taps, bathroom surfaces and toilets, bedside tables, phones, keyboards, and tablets.

Use a detergent followed by a disinfectant for all cleaning (or a 2-in-1 product). The recommended disinfectant is 1000 parts per million (ppm) of bleach/chlorine. Always use freshly made solutions.

If you get any spit, blood, or other body waste on any surface, clean it well with detergent and disinfectant and put the cloth in the wash or the rubbish.

Put your dirty clothes and sheets straight in the washing machine when you remove them. Wash your hands after handling dirty washing. Use your normal clothes detergent.

Wash dishes and cutlery well. Use a dishwasher if you can.

If someone wants to clean your room, ask them to put on a facemask and disposable/single use gloves before entering the room. Tell them to wash their hands or use alcohol-based hand rub before and after wearing gloves.

Rubbish

Put used facemasks, tissues, and other rubbish straight into a plastic rubbish bag in your bin then wash your hands. Only use disposable facemasks once.

Tie a knot in the rubbish bag before putting it out for collection. If you don't have a collection service, tie a knot in the bag and store it in a metal or plastic bin safely until you can get it to the rubbish tip.

Wash your hands after handling rubbish.

Do the people I live with have to stay at home?

Yes. If you have COVID-19, the people living with you now and in the two days before you developed symptoms are considered close contacts. You must advise them they must stay at home too, even if they are well. This is called being in quarantine. They need to quarantine because people can spread COVID-19 to other people up to 48 hours (two days) before they start to feel sick or have a positive swab result).

Close contacts, except in exceptional circumstances, must quarantine for 7 days after the last exposure to a case, regardless of vaccination status.

Information for **close contacts** is available on the [coronavirus website](https://coronavirus.tas.gov.au).

Close contacts can leave quarantine if they have a negative Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) on day 6. They must wear a mask when outside the home and monitor for symptoms for a further 7 days and repeat testing if symptoms occur.

If they have a positive result from their Rapid Antigen Test, they should register their result at coronavirus.tas.gov.au/positive-result-declaration-form or call the Public Health Hotline on 1800 671 738.

What about other people I've seen recently?

People you have spent time with since you got COVID-19 and in the two to three days before you got COVID-19 may also be considered a close contact. A close contact is someone who has had prolonged contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case during their infectious period, creating a high risk for transmission.

This could be a person who is a household contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case, or someone who has spent more than four hours (the 4 hours can be cumulative and occur

during the case's infectious period) with a confirmed case in a house, accommodation or care facility setting. A close contact can also be someone that has spent 4 hours at the same site, workplace or venue as a case during a significant transmission event.

Examples of likely close contacts include:

- household contacts
- social contacts with extensive interaction with the case
- workplace contacts where prolonged exposures may have occurred and COVID-safe behaviours have not been implemented.

A person might still be a close contact if they have spent less than 4 hours face-to-face with a case but there is a risk of transmission based on:

- one or both people are not vaccinated
- PPE has not been used appropriately
- the setting increases the risk eg is indoors, small room, poor ventilation
- the nature of the exposure increases the risk eg shouting or singing.

You will need to contact your close contacts and tell them what to do

Tell your close contacts who are household and household-like contacts – they must isolate for 7 days.

This means:

- Anyone who lives in your house is a close contact – tell them to quarantine for 7 days and have a rapid antigen tests (RAT) on day 1 and 6.
- Anyone who has visited your home for more than 4 hours over a day is a close contact – tell them to quarantine for 7 days and have a RAT on day 1 and 6.
- If you have visited another household for more than 4 hours, all members of that household are close contacts, tell them to quarantine for 7 days and have a RAT on day 1 and 6.

	Definition	Management day 1 - day 7	Management day 8 - day 14
Close contact	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Household contact of a case2. Household-like contact of a case (spent 4 hours or more in the same accommodation)3. 4 hours or more at same site or venue as a case where there is increased risk of transmission4. Less than 4 hours with a case where there is very high risk of transmission	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quarantine for 7 days• RAT on day 1 and 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mask wearing outside of home (indoor and outdoor) and avoid high risk settings and vulnerable people• Monitor closely for symptoms and have a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) if any symptoms develop.• Maintain physical distancing (1.5m) from other people.

- A close contact can also be someone that has spent 4 hours at the same site, workplace or venue as a case during a significant transmission event.

Close contacts can leave isolation on day 7 if they received a negative result from a test.

Tell your social contacts

You must tell your social contacts that you have tested positive for COVID-19, and they must get tested if they develop any symptoms. Your social contacts are people who you have had 15 minutes of face-to-face contact with, or spent 2 hours with, in the same indoor space.

Your social contacts are not people from home, your workplace or school.

If they develop symptoms, they should first test themselves with a RAT, if one is available, or otherwise seek a PCR test if unable to obtain a RAT. They should isolate until they receive a negative test result. People who test positive using a RAT are considered a confirmed COVID-19 case.

People who are your close contacts cannot follow this advice, close contacts must isolate for 7 days.

Tell your workplace and/or education facility

If you worked onsite while infectious, you must tell your employer / workplace you have tested positive to COVID-19.

Your employer / workplace will tell other staff who are workplace contacts that they must:

- get a RAT test if they have symptoms and isolate until they get a negative result

Workplace exposures – where masks are worn will not be deemed as close contacts. Workplaces will not be listed as exposure sites and will not be ordered to close down.

If you or your child attended an education facility (school, childcare or early childhood) while infectious, you must tell the education facility you have tested positive for COVID-19.

The education facility will tell other students and staff who are education contacts that they must get a RAT test if they have symptoms.

Direct all your close contacts to coronavirus.tas.gov.au for full details on what to do.

How can I protect people I live with who are at risk of severe illness from COVID-19?

It's important to protect the people you live with. This is especially important for people you live with who are at risk of severe illness.

Those at risk of severe illness are those people:

- over the age of 70 years
- receiving immune suppressive therapy following organ transplant
- who have had a bone marrow transplant in the last 24 months or are on immune suppressive therapy for graft versus host disease
- with blood cancers such as leukaemia, lymphoma, or myelodysplastic syndrome, diagnosed within the last five years
- having chemotherapy or radiotherapy.

People at risk of moderate illness include those with chronic (long-term) health conditions like diabetes, lung disease, heart disease, severe obesity, cancer, and kidney failure.

If you live with anyone at risk of severe or moderate illness from COVID-19, it's best if they (or you) can stay elsewhere. Seek advice from Public Health.

How can I protect people I live with who are not at risk of severe illness?

Stay apart

- Stay in a separate room as much as you can. Avoid shared areas like the kitchen, lounge room.
- Sleep in a separate bed and use a separate bathroom if you can.
- If you must be in the same room, be as quick as you can, try to keep at least 1.5 metres (two very large steps) away and wear a facemask.
- Don't share dishes, glasses, cups, cutlery, towels, bedding, toothbrushes, or other items with people in your house. Do not share food or drinks.

Watch your personal hygiene

Wash your hands often, especially:

- before going to a room you share with others or touching things other people use
- after coughing, sneezing, nose blowing, touching your face, smoking, eating, and going to the toilet.
- Always cover coughs and sneezes. Use a tissue (if available), put the tissue straight in the bin, and finish by washing your hands. If you don't have a tissue handy, use the inside of your elbow.
- Wash your hands with soap and water. Get a good soap lather and rub for at least 20 seconds. Dry them well too. Alcohol-based hand rub is OK to use if your hands look clean.

How can I care for a child in isolation or quarantine?

The Tasmanian Department of Education has advice on how to talk to your child about COVID-19. Find it at coronavirus.tas.gov.au/families-community/schools.

Ask your child's teachers to supply assignments, work sheets, and homework by post or email, and check if your child can join classes online.

If well enough, treat isolation as an opportunity to do some of those things you never usually have time for, such as board games, craft, puzzles, and drawing.

How can I look after my mental health?

Being concerned about having COVID-19 and coping with isolation and restrictions can result in complex feelings.

Below are some tips to help you look after yourself.

- **Stay connected:** talk to friends and family members on the phone and keep in touch through email and social media.
- **Call for support:** think about how you have coped with difficult situations before. Use strategies that have helped you before.
- **Keep active:** find ways to keep your body active while you are in isolation. Even if you feel unwell, it's important to take regular deep breaths and move around.
- **Keep routines:** try to keep some of your usual daily routines going. Eat at usual times and keep to your usual sleeping routine.
- **Eat well.** Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables.
- **Set limits.** Avoid increasing your use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs. Consider reducing your use instead.
- **Get help:** seek help early if you are concerned about your health in any way. See the list of support services and resources that follow.

Support resources and services

- **Lifeline Australia:** phone 13 11 14 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week), lifeline.org.au.
A crisis support service offering immediate short-term support at any time for people who are having difficulty coping or staying safe.
- **Head to Health:** headtohealth.gov.au
Provides easy access to a wide range of online mental health resources including apps, online programs, online forums, phone services and digital information resources.

- **Beyond Blue:** phone 1800 512 348 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week), coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au
- **Headspace:** phone 1800 650 893 (9:00 am to 1:00 am, seven days a week), headspace.org.au/eheadspace
Online and webchat support and counselling for 12 to 25-year-olds, their families and friends.
- **Tasmanian Mental Health Helpline:** phone 1800 332 388 (24 hours, seven days a week).
For mental health advice, assessment, and referral. The service is staffed by community mental health clinicians who can assess your information and determine the most appropriate action, for example:
 - refer you to a Mental Health Community team in your area
 - refer you to a Community Mental Health Crisis Response team that is available during extended working hours, seven days a week.
 - provide contact details for another service that might be more suitable for you.
- **Mensline:** phone 1300 78 99 78 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week), mensline.org.au.
Professional telephone and online support and information service for Australian men.
- **Mindspot:** phone 1800 61 44 34 (8:00 am to 8:00 pm, Monday to Friday; 8:00 am to 6:00 pm, Saturday), mindspot.org.au.
Free telephone and online service for people with stress, worry, anxiety, low mood or depression. It provides online assessment and treatment for anxiety and depression and can help you find local services.

More information about supporting mental health support is available on the Tasmanian Government website at coronavirus.tas.gov.au/keeping-yourself-safe/support-services.

If you are worried or upset, call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Beyond Blue on 1300 224 636. In an emergency, call 000.

How can I stay informed?

It's important to stay informed as the situation changes.

For information about COVID-19 in Tasmania, go to coronavirus.tas.gov.au or call the Public Health Hotline on 1800 671 738.

For information about COVID-19 in Australia, go to health.gov.au or call the National Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080.

