

NSW Health self-isolation guidelines for close contacts



You need to isolate yourself in your home or another suitable place of residence if you have been identified as a close contact of a person with confirmed COVID-19 infection. Home isolation for close contacts is enforceable under the Public Health (COVID Self-Isolation) Order (No 3) 2020.

A close contact is someone who has been near enough to a person with COVID-19 while they were infectious that there is a reasonable chance they will have become infected with COVID-19. Close contact can occur in a number of places including in the home, or at other venues.

An authorised contact tracer is a NSW Health worker who investigates COVID-19 to identify and follow up people who have had contact with someone with COVID-19.

How long do I need to be in home isolation?

All close contacts will need to self-isolate, even if you are currently feeling well.

You will need to isolate until 14 days after you last saw that person or attended a place where that person visited.

The relevant period for isolation will be notified to you in writing by an authorised contact tracer (this may be in the form of a text message).

You must:

- self-isolate at your residence or another suitable place for the period of time determined by the authorised contact tracer (this will be no more than 14 days)
- notify the authorised contact tracer of the place you will be self-isolating and provide a contact phone number.

Getting to your home or a hotel if you are identified as a close contact

People identified as close contacts should travel directly to the place where you will undertake your self-isolation (home, hotel or other accommodation). You can travel by private car, public transport, taxi or ride-share (rear-seat), provided that you are well.

Monitor symptoms and seek help if they develop

Testing people without symptoms for COVID-19 does not help identify people who may become sick later.

This is why it is so important to detect any sign of infection as early as possible.

You should monitor yourself for any new symptoms. Watch particularly for:

- fever (37.5°C or higher) or history of fever (night sweats, chills)
- cough
- shortness of breath (difficulty breathing)
- sore throat
- loss of smell
- loss of taste.

Other reported symptoms of COVID-19 include fatigue, runny nose, muscle pain, joint pain, headache, diarrhoea, nausea/vomiting and loss of appetite.

If you develop symptoms, you should seek help as soon as possible.

You have four main options:

- Visit your nearest [COVID-19 clinic or drive through clinic](#) or drive through clinic. When you arrive, immediately tell staff that you are a close contact of a person with COVID-19.
- Call your local doctor to make an appointment and tell them you are a close contact.
- Call the healthdirect hotline on 1800 022 222 and tell them you are a close contact.
- If you are unable to travel to get tested, you can also get a test kit for self-collection at home via [Histopath](#).

Note: If you go to see a doctor make sure you wear a surgical mask while you go there. You should travel directly to the doctor or COVID-19 clinic by private car. NSW Health advises you not to use public transport.

If you become severely unwell and it is a medical emergency you should phone 000. Tell the ambulance staff that you have been a close contact of someone with COVID-19.

Can I go to work or school? Can I have visitors?

No. Home isolation means you must stay at your home or other accommodation and restrict your normal activities.

If you are staying in a hotel or motel, you should not leave your room.

You cannot go to work, school, childcare, university, recreation facilities, or public areas, or go shopping.

You should not allow people who do not have an essential need to be in the home to visit while you are in isolation.

You can leave your home to seek medical care or because of an emergency (including to avoid injury or escape a risk of harm from domestic violence) but you should wear a surgical mask.

Can I go into the garden?

You can go into your private garden or courtyard or onto your private balcony if you have one.

Separate yourself from the other people in your home

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

- remain separated from others
- wear a surgical mask when you are in the same room as another person
- use a separate bathroom, if available
- avoid shared or communal areas and wear a surgical mask when moving through these areas.
- not share a room with people who are at risk of severe disease, such as elderly people, immunocompromised people, and those who have heart, lung or kidney conditions, and diabetes
- in circumstances where you are not able to separate yourself from other members of your household, they should also be isolated for 14 days (this would normally apply to children).

Wash your hands

You should wash your hands often and thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use a hand sanitiser. Make sure you wash your hands:

- before entering an area used by other people
- before touching things used by other people
- after using the bathroom
- after coughing or sneezing
- before putting on and after removing facemasks.

Wear your mask properly

You should wear a surgical mask when you are in the same room with other people (even if they are also in isolation) and when you visit a healthcare provider.

Make sure it covers your nose and mouth at all times and avoid touching your mask while you're wearing it.

Other people sharing a house with you

Other people who are sharing a house with you do not need to home isolate. However, if you become infected with COVID-19, people sharing the house with you will become close contacts and they will then be required to self-isolate for a period of 14 days from the day you were tested.

Do I need to be tested before leaving isolation?

Following 14 days isolation, if you remain well then you do not require any tests before being released from isolation.

If you develop any of the symptoms listed in the 'monitor symptoms' section of this document during the isolation period then you need to get assessed and tested for COVID-19. If you test negative, you still need to remain in isolation until the original 14 day isolation period finishes.

For more information, refer to [Release from isolation](#).

What happens if you don't comply with the self-isolation?

Not following these guidelines puts family, friends and the community at risk. Not following these rules is also a criminal offence and attracts heavy penalties. For individuals, the maximum penalty is \$11,000, 6 months in prison, or both with a further \$5,500 fine for each day the offence.

Tips for you and your family to help cope with home isolation

Being in home isolation can be frightening, particularly for young children. We've put together some tips for coping:

- Talk to the other members of the family about COVID-19 to reduce anxiety. You can find accurate, up to date information Visit [NSW Health - COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\)](#).
- Reassure young children using age-appropriate language.
- Keep up a normal daily routine as much as possible.
- Arrange with your employer to work from home, if possible.
- If your child is a closed contact, ask your child's school to supply lesson information and homework by email.
- Think about how you have coped with difficult situations in the past and reassure yourself that you will cope with this situation too. Remember that isolation won't last for long.
- Keep in touch with family members and friends via telephone, email or social media.
- Exercise regularly at home. Options could include exercise DVDs, dancing, floor exercises, yoga, walking around the backyard or using home exercise equipment, such as a stationary bicycle, if you have it. Exercise is a proven treatment for stress and depression.
- Ask your family, friends or other members of the household to pick up your groceries and medicines for you. If this is not possible, you may be able to order groceries and medicines (including prescription medicines) online or by telephone.

More information and support

For more information and support while in home isolation:

- [Lifeline Australia](#): 13 11 14
A crisis support service that provides short term support at any time for people who are having difficulty coping or staying safe.
- [Kids Helpline](#): 1800 551800
A free, private and confidential 24/7 phone and online counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25 years.
- NSW Mental Health Line: 1800 011 511
Mental health crisis telephone service in NSW.
- Visit [NSW Health - COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\)](#)