

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) - suspected case

What you need to know

You have been identified by your doctor as having symptoms compatible with coronavirus disease (COVID-19). You must isolate yourself in your home, hotel or healthcare setting until your doctor has informed you that it is safe for you to return to your usual activities. Please read this information carefully.

What is coronavirus disease (COVID-19)?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which may cause illness in animals or humans. The most recently discovered coronavirus (COVID-19) is a new virus that can cause mild to severe respiratory illness in humans. An outbreak of COVID-19 has spread around the world and has been characterised as a pandemic.

What is a suspected case?

A suspected case is someone who has symptoms or signs of COVID-19 and who is being tested for infection but has not found out the results of the tests yet. **Until the results are known this means there is a risk that you could have COVID-19 infection and could spread the virus to other people.** As such, it is very important that you follow the recommendations outlined in this fact sheet.

What do I need to do?

Your doctor will arrange for you to be tested for the infection. It may take a few days for the test results to be returned. If your symptoms are serious you will need to remain in hospital isolated from other patients to prevent further spread of the virus.

If your doctor says you are well enough to return home while you are waiting for your test results you will need to stay isolated and monitor your symptoms as described below.

Stay at home or in your hotel room or healthcare setting

- Isolate yourself at home or in your accommodation until you are advised of the results by your doctor.
 - **You should not leave your house or accommodation except to seek medical attention.**
 - You should stay in a different room to other people as much as possible. Use a separate bathroom if available.
 - Wear a surgical face mask when you are in the same room as another person and when seeking medical care.
 - Do not go to work, school, university, work or attend public places or events. Do not use public transport or taxi services.
 - Where possible, get others such as friends or family, who are not required to be isolated, to get food or other necessities for you.
- If you have difficulties getting food or necessities, call 1800 675 398 for support.

- If you need a translator first call 131 450, then request the hotline on 1800 675 398. More information is available on our website: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorian-public-coronavirus-disease-covid-19>
- Please keep Triple Zero (000) for emergencies only.

Going outside

If you live in a private house, then it is safe for you to go outside into your garden, balcony or courtyard.

If you live in an apartment it is also safe for you to go outside into the garden or courtyard while wearing a surgical mask. You should, however, go quickly through any common areas on the way to the garden. Wear a surgical mask if you have to move through these areas.

Make sure you keep a distance of 1.5 metres between yourself and any other people you encounter in common areas.

Monitor your symptoms

If your illness gets worse, you should call the doctor who cared for you or the emergency department where you were assessed. If it is a medical emergency (for example, shortness of breath at rest or difficulty breathing) you should:

- Call 000 and request an ambulance
- Inform the ambulance officers that you may have novel coronavirus, and they should take precautions.

What happens if my test is negative?

Your doctor or a Public Health Officer will advise you when you can cease your isolation. If you were in self-isolation at the time you developed your symptoms, for example because you have been in contact with a confirmed case or travelled overseas, you will need to continue isolation until 14 days since last contact with the confirmed case or since your arrival in Australia.

You should continue to carefully monitor your health for the full 14-day period. Report any new or returning symptoms to your doctor in this period. You may be required to be tested again.

You do not require medical clearance to return to work, university or school. If you have stayed in isolation for 14 days and remain well, then you are safe to return to your usual activities.

What happens if my test is positive?

Both your doctor and a Public Health Officer will contact you to find out more information from you and provide you with further information. After a discussion, a specialist may be involved to further assess your illness. You must remain in your home or accommodation until you have become well and a Public Health Officer has conducted an assessment to advise it is safe to return to normal activities.

If your condition deteriorates, seek medical attention:

- Notify the department or Public Health Officer managing your care by calling the number provided to you.
- Follow the direction of the Public Health Officer who may advise you to go to a doctor or a hospital, and will agree with you how you should get there.
- Call ahead to the doctor or hospital and inform them that you are a confirmed case of novel coronavirus.
- If you need to leave your home or accommodation to seek medical attention, put on the mask provided to you.
- When you arrive at the doctor's surgery or hospital, tell them that you are a confirmed case of novel coronavirus.

If you are experiencing severe symptoms, such as shortness of breath:

- Call 000 and request an ambulance
- Inform the ambulance officers that you have novel coronavirus.

People who you have had close contact with including family members and people you live with will need to isolate themselves for 14 days since their last contact with you.

How can I prevent the spread of the virus?

Practising good hand and sneeze/cough hygiene is the best defence:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, including before and after eating as well as after attending the toilet.
- Avoid all contact with others.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Dispose of the tissue afterwards.
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow
- Try not to touch your eyes, nose or mouth

Should I wear a face mask?

If you are ill, you should put on a mask if you have one to prevent spreading the infection to others. You should be given a mask to wear by your doctor when tested. Face masks are not recommended if you do not have symptoms. A facemask will not protect you against becoming infected.

Looking after your wellbeing during isolation

Being confined to home for an extended period can cause stress and conflict. Tips for looking after yourself include:

- Talk to the other members of the family about the infection. Understanding novel coronavirus will reduce anxiety.
- Reassure young children using age-appropriate language.
- 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 self-isolation won't last for long.
- Exercise regularly. 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.
- Keep in touch with family members and friends via telephone, email or social media.
- Keep up a normal daily routine as much as possible.
- Arrange with your employer to work from home, if possible.
- Ask your child's school to supply assignments, work sheets and homework by post or email, or if the student can join the class using online options.
- Don't rely too heavily on the television and technology. Treat self-isolation as an opportunity to do some of those things you never usually have time for, such as board games, craft, drawing and reading.
- If you are struggling to cope you call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Beyond Blue on 1300 22 4636.

Where can I find out more information?

Call the Department of Health and Human Services on to discuss any questions you have. If you need a translator first call 131 450, then request the hotline on 1300 651 160.

For Victorian updates to the current incident, go to: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>

For national updates: <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>

For international updates: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/novel-coronavirus>

WHO resources <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>

To receive this publication in an accessible format phone 1300 651 160, using the National Relay Service 131 450 if required, or email [Public Health branch](mailto:public.health@dhhs.vic.gov.au) <public.health@dhhs.vic.gov.au>.

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