

Care Package for Close Contacts



Western Health

Updated 30 August 2021

COVID - 19

Be Safe -- Be Smart -- Be Kind

Who should read this?

Western Health staff, students or contractors who are a possible or confirmed close contact of a COVID-19 case.

What is this document about?

If you are a possible or confirmed close contact of a COVID-19 case, it can be a confusing, frustrating, and anxiety provoking time. This care package is designed to provide you with information and resources to help you feel more informed, and where to access help if you need to.

Why am I defined as a close contact?

A close contact is someone who has been identified as having spent time with someone who has COVID-19. There are two types of close contact- a primary close contact and a secondary close contact.

A primary close contact is a person who has had face to face contact or spent time in a closed space with someone who has COVID-19 while they were infectious. A primary close contact may also be someone who has been in an outbreak or other setting where there is a higher risk of transmission of COVID-19.

A secondary close contact is someone who has had face to face contact with a primary close contact at least 24 hours after they were exposed to COVID-19.

A thorough definition of a primary and secondary close contacts can be found in the 'COVID-19 Case and contact management guidelines for health services and GPs' available on the Department of Health website <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>. Further information about close contacts can also be located here <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/what-do-if-you-are-close-contact>.

What do I have to do?

If you think you have had close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case, you need to notify The Department of Health (DH) Victorian Coronavirus Hotline on **1800 675 398/ 1300 651 160** or the Western Public Health Unit on **8345 4043** as soon as possible. You should stay at home until it is determined if you are a close contact. If you are determined to be a close contact you may be directed to quarantine.

Please also contact the Western Health COVID-19 Enquires line via email whscovid-19staffclinicenquiries@wh.org.au or call via switch. The Western Health COVID-19 Enquires line will provide guidance and support, and help you to navigate the impact on return to work.

What is quarantine?

Quarantine means you must stay in your home. You cannot leave your house for any reason unless it is an emergency or you need medical help. The Local Public Health Unit (LPHU) or DH will call you and tell you when you can finish your quarantine. You can only leave your home after the LPHU or DH gives you permission. Primary close contacts must quarantine at home and get tested when the LPHU or DH asks

them to. Secondary close contacts are also asked to quarantine at home. If you are unsure where you should quarantine or do not have a place where you can do so safely, you should call the Victorian Coronavirus Hotline on [1800 675 398](tel:1800675398). If you require a hotel to enable you to quarantine, please refer to the Hotels for Heroes information below.

I am quarantining at home – what if I live with other people?

Where possible, you should stay in separate accommodation to anybody who has had an exposure. If you cannot do this and you are a Primary Close Contact (PCC), you should quarantine away from everyone else in your home. If you are a Secondary Close Contact (SCC) you should quarantine away from the PCC. The Local Public Health Unit or DH will tell you if the people you live with also need to quarantine.

If you cannot quarantine in separate accommodation:

- You should stay and sleep in a different room and wear a mask when you are out of your room.
- You should use a separate bathroom if available.
- The kitchen should be cleaned before and after use
- Do not share food and drink.
- Nobody can visit you inside your home or accommodation.
- Ensure you stay at least 1.5 metres from others in the home when you are out of your room.

If I have symptoms – what should I do?

If you become unwell or have symptoms of COVID-19, you should immediately seek medical advice and get tested for COVID-19.

- Contact the Victorian Coronavirus Hotline on [1800 675 398](tel:1800675398) (24 hours, 7 days a week) for advice
- Make an appointment to see your GP. Phone or video (telehealth) consultations are preferred to reduce the chance of spreading COVID-19. If you need to see your doctor in person, call ahead of your arrival and let your GP know you are in quarantine and are a close contact of someone with COVID-19 so they can prepare appropriate infection control measures.
- If you have serious symptoms, such as difficulty breathing, call triple zero and ask for an ambulance. Tell them that you are a close contact of a person with COVID-19 and that you are in quarantine.
- If you have COVID-19 symptoms, you may also seek testing at a COVID-19 testing clinic. COVID-19 testing clinics operated by Western Health include, Sunshine Hospital COVID-19 testing clinic, Sunbury COVID-19 testing clinic and Showgrounds COVID-19 testing clinic. Refer to the [Western Health Coronavirus Site](#) for opening hours.
- Common symptoms of COVID-19 include the following fever >37.5, chills, breathing difficulties, breathlessness, cough, sore throat, runny nose, fatigue or tiredness, acute loss of taste or smell, body aches, headache, myalgia, stuffy nose, nausea, vomiting or diarrhoea. Once you have been tested you must immediately return to quarantine.

Can I go outside during quarantine?

While you are in quarantine you need to stay at home (or in the place where you are quarantining). If you are quarantining in a private house or apartment you can go into your garden or onto your balcony. You should wear a face mask when moving through shared spaces to reduce the risk of passing COVID-19 to the people you live with.

Can I leave home while in quarantine?

You are only allowed to leave home for the following special reasons:

- To seek medical care or medical supplies
- To get tested for COVID-19
- In an emergency or if required by law
- If you or your family are escaping harm or are at risk of harm from family violence

You must wear a fitted face mask when you leave your place of quarantine for any of the above reasons.

If you are experiencing family violence, you can leave the place you are quarantining to seek support and assistance. Call Safe Steps on 1800 015 188 or email safesteps@safesteps.org.au for help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

How do I get food or other supplies such as medication while I am in quarantine?

If you don't live with others, you should order food or supplies to be delivered to your house, or have friends, family or your carer drop off supplies to your house. Anyone delivering these items should not enter your house or come in contact with you. If possible, they should leave the supplies at your front door. This is to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19. Support is available if you need help while in isolation or quarantine. Refer to: [Isolation and quarantine extra help and support](#).

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?

You can wear a surgical mask to prevent potential COVID-19 transmission to others. If you require provision of surgical masks to enable you to quarantine safely at home/ in your accommodation, please refer to Appendix 1.

Looking after your wellbeing during quarantine

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

- Talk to other members of your family about the infection. Understanding COVID-19 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-quarantine won't last for long.

- Exercise regularly. Options could include exercise DVDs or phone app, 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.
- 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 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-quarantine 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 can call Lifeline on [13 11 14](tel:131114) or Beyond Blue on [1300 22 4636](tel:1300224636).

Support through Western Health includes the following options:

Wellbeing & Support

Wellbeing & Support resources are on the Western Health COVID-10 microsite <https://coronavirus.wh.org.au/wellbeing-support/> . For further information you can email the Wellbeing & Support team directly on WellbeingSupport@wh.org.au.

The Employee Assistance Program

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a free short term counselling program that is available for all Western Health employees to assist them deal with any personal or work related issues. For further information please visit the Western Health intranet or contact EAP via phone 1800 099 044 (24 hours per day, 7 days per week); email work@caraniche.com.au or book online <http://work.caraniche.com.au/make-a-booking/>.

Western Health COVID-19 Enquiries for Healthcare Workers

If you have any COVID-19 related questions please contact the Western Health COVID-19 Helpdesk.

The Helpdesk is staffed 8:00 – 16:30 Monday to Friday and 9:00 – 13:00 Saturday and Sunday which can be accessed either via switch 8345 6666 (ask to be put through to the COVID Helpdesk for Healthcare Workers) or via email whscovid-19staffclinicenquiries@wh.org.au.

Manager welfare checks

Your manager will offer you regular welfare phone calls throughout your 14 days of quarantine, and will work with you to ensure your needs are met.

What does this mean for my family, friends and co-workers?

If you are in quarantine because you have been in close contact with someone who is a confirmed case of COVID-19, your family members and other people you have been in contact with (secondary close contacts) may also need to quarantine. Your secondary contact's quarantine parameters will be determined by the Department of Health. You should continue to minimise contact with other people,

including your family. Wherever possible, remain in a separate room in the house. If you do have to be in the same room, wear a mask and maintain 1.5 metres distance between yourself and others. Wash your hands regularly and disinfect surfaces you have touched with a common household disinfectant.

Do I need to inform people I have been in contact with?

Tell the people you live with that you are quarantining at home. This is important as they may need to quarantine themselves. If you do develop symptoms while you are in quarantine, and test positive for the virus, your close contacts will need to be informed. In this situation Western Health will collaborate with LPHU or DH to determine who your close contacts are. Western Health and/ or the LPHU will then contact those people and explain what they need to do.

For example, co-workers may not be close contacts – it depends how closely you have worked together and for how long. Also, consideration will be given to the effective use of appropriate PPE. Western Health in collaboration with LPHU or DH will determine if they need to be contacted or not. *Please note, your name cannot be disclosed to your co-workers by the Contact Tracing Team without permission from you.*

Do I need to be tested for COVID-19?

To obtain clearance to return to work you are required to undergo COVID-19 testing on day 13 of your 14 day quarantine period.

If you develop symptoms at any stage while in quarantine, you will need to be tested for the virus. Please refer to the section “If I have symptoms – what should I do?” above.

What happens at the end of my quarantine period?

You will be informed by the LPHU or DH when you will be able to leave self-quarantine. You will be informed by the Staff Enquiries Covid-19 Helpdesk, any return to work clearance requirements and when you are able to safely return to work.

Hotels for Heroes

Hotels for Heroes is an initiative supporting healthcare workers who are required to self- quarantine who are not able to do so in their usual accommodation. To see whether you are eligible for this initiative please refer to the Hotels for Heroes QRG on the Western Health Coronavirus Site. To contact the Hotels for Heroes team you can do so via email Covid-19HotelsForHeroes@wh.org.au or you can call on 8345 6666 (option 1 & request Hotels for Heroes) 8:00 – 16:30, Monday – Friday and 9:00 – 13:00 Saturday and Sunday.

References

This document is based on the following DH guidance documents:

Victorian Government. (2021). *What to do if you are a close contact of a person diagnosed with COVID-19*. Retrieved from <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/what-do-if-you-are-close-contact>

Department of Health and Human Services. (2021). *Coronavirus (COVID-19) Case and contact management guidelines Version 27.1* Retrieved from https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwiRk_rwtYzxAhUb8H

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Appendix 1: Provision of masks to Western Health staff in quarantine

This section outlines the procedure for the provision of surgical masks to Western Health staff members who have been directed to quarantine.

What is the purpose of providing surgical masks?

COVID-19 is transmitted via infectious droplets produced by infected people when they cough, sneeze or speak, coming into contact with our mucous membranes (eyes, nose and mouth). These droplets can also land on surfaces. Touching one of these surfaces, then touching our mucous membranes can also lead to infection. Masks protect our mucous membranes (nose and mouth) from infectious droplets. They also act as a physical barrier, preventing us from touching our mucous membranes with contaminated hands.

Who will Western Health provide masks to?

Western Health will provide masks to:

- Staff who have been directed by Western Health to quarantine as they have been identified as a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19
- Staff who have been diagnosed with COVID-19

Western Health **will not** provide masks to:

- Staff who have **not** been directed by Western Health to quarantine (e.g. directed by LPHU or have elected to quarantine on their own accord)
- Staff who are isolating due to a COVID-19 exposure which did not occur while working at Western Health

How many masks will be provided?

Fourteen surgical masks will be provided to the staff member in quarantine to accommodate the full isolation period. Masks must not be shared with other members of the household.

Who to contact if you require surgical masks

If you require surgical masks and meet the above eligibility criteria, please contact the COVID-19 Enquiries line via email whscovid-19staffclinicenquiries@wh.org.au. The staff clinic enquiries staff will send you the following in an express post satchel (next day delivery):

- 14 surgical masks in a paper bag
- A copy of the 'Close Contact Care Package'
- A copy of the 'How to wear a medical mask safely' QRG