Coronavirus (COVID-19) close contact

What you need to know

> You have been told by the Department of Health and Human Services' public health team that you are a "close contact" of someone with coronavirus (COVID-19).
>
> You must quarantine yourself in your home, hotel or health care setting for 14 days after you last had contact with that person. You must quarantine yourself until the public health team tells you it is safe to end your quarantine period.
>
> It is very important that you follow this guidance – it is required under the law.

What is coronavirus (COVID-19)?

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a virus that usually causes mild respiratory illness. Some people may have coronavirus (COVID-19) but feel well and have no symptoms, which is known as being asymptomatic. Coronavirus (COVID-19) can be a more severe illness for some in our community, including for elderly people and those with chronic medical conditions.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is spread from **close contact** with an infected person when they cough or sneeze. It can also be picked up) from surfaces contaminated by a person with coronavirus (COVID-19). That is why the best way to protect others is to practise physical distancing and good personal hygiene.

What is a close contact?

Close contact means having face-to-face contact for more than 15 minutes or sharing a closed space for more than two hours with a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) while they were infectious.

Close contact can happen in many ways, but examples include:

- living in the same household or household-like setting (for example, a boarding school or hostel)
- direct contact with the body fluids or laboratory specimens of a confirmed case
- being in the same room or office for two hours or more
- face-to-face contact for more than 15 minutes in some other setting such as in a car or a lift or sitting next to them on public transport.

What do I need to do?

Stay at home or in your hotel room or healthcare setting

- Quarantine yourself at home or in your accommodation until 14 days after you were last exposed to the infectious person. The Department of Health and Human Services (the department) will be in contact with you to inform you of your quarantine dates.
  - **You must not leave your accommodation except to seek medical attention or in an emergency.**

- You should stay in a different room to other people as much as possible. Sleep in a separate bedroom and use a separate bathroom if available.
- Do not use public transport or taxi services.
- Where possible, get others such as friends or family, who are not required to be quarantined, to get food or other necessities for you.
- If you have difficulties getting food or necessities, call the coronavirus hotline on 1800 675 398 for support.
- If you need a translator, call 131 450, then request the hotline on 1800 675 398. More information is available on our website: https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus
- 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 communal 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 and wash your hands before you leave and when you get back.
- Make sure you keep a distance of 1.5 metres between yourself and any other people you encounter in common areas.

Monitor your symptoms

- Monitor your health until 14 days after you were last exposed to the infectious person (the department will tell you when that was).
- Watch for any symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19), such as fever, chills or sweats, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, runny nose, loss of sense of smell or loss or taste. See https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/getting-tested-coronavirus-covid-19#should-i-get-tested for more information.

You will be contacted regularly by the department to check whether you have had symptoms.

What if I develop symptoms?

If you develop any of the symptoms listed above at any time during your quarantine period:

- Call a doctor or the coronavirus (COVID-19) hotline on 1800 675 398 and inform them that you have had contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) and you have symptoms.
- Put on a mask if you have one when going to and from testings.
- Continue to keep yourself away from others.
- Do not use public transport or taxi services to travel to your general practice, hospital or testing site.
- When you arrive at the general practice, hospital or other testing locations, tell them again that you are a contact of a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Your doctor or the staff at the hospital emergency department will ensure you are wearing a mask and take you through to a room away from others. They may take nose and throat swabs to send for testing for coronavirus (COVID-19).

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

- Call 000 and request an ambulance.
- Inform the ambulance officers that you have been in close contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19).

How can I play a part in helping to slow the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19)?

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.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or your elbow.
- Try not to touch your eyes, nose or mouth.
- You must stay at home, and if you develop any symptoms, not matter how mild, you should get tested.

Should I wear a face mask?

Face masks are not recommended if you do not have symptoms. A face mask will not protect you against becoming infected.

If you are ill, you should put on a mask if you have one to prevent spreading the infection to others. You will be given a mask to wear by your doctor.

Looking after your wellbeing during quarantine

For some people, 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 or friends about being in quarantine. Sharing your experience can help reduce anxiety.
- Reassure young children who may have questions about coronavirus (COVID-19) or quarantine using age-appropriate language. The Department of Education and Training have good resources to help talk to children about this. https://education.vic.gov.au/parents/Pages/talkingtoyourchildaboutcoronavirus.aspx
- 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, dancing, floor exercises, yoga, walking around the backyard or using home exercise equipment, such as a stationary bicycle, if you have one. 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 with your employer to work from home, if possible. If you can work from home, you must work from home.
- 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.
- Try not to rely too heavily on the television and technology. Instead, try treating 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 or Beyond Blue on 1300 22 4636.

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 coronavirus (COVID-19), your family members and other people you have been in contact with **do not need to be quarantined**.

However, you should 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 clean surfaces you have touched with a common household disinfectant.

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

If you are a close contact of someone with coronavirus (COVID-19) and have not experienced any symptoms, you do not need to inform other people you have had contact with a case.

However, if you do develop symptoms while you are in quarantine, and test positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), your close contacts will need to be informed. In this situation a Public Health Officer from the Department of Health and Human Services will contact you to determine who your close contacts are. The Public Health Officer will then contact those people and explain what they need to do.

The Public Health Officer will determine if they need to be contacted or not.

For example, co-workers may not be *close* contacts – it depends how closely you have worked together and for how long. The Public Health Officer will determine if they need to be contacted or not.

For more information on close contacts, visit https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorian-public-coronavirus-disease-covid-19#how-do-you-define-close-contact

What happens at the end of my quarantine period?

Towards the end of your quarantine period you will be advised to have a **virus clearance test**. This is a swab from the back of your throat and nose.

You will be informed whether you will be able to leave quarantine once your test results are available.

You will need to remain in quarantine for 14 days after the last time you had close contact with the infected person even if you receive a negative test result before the 14-day period ends.

If you develop symptoms at any time while in quarantine, you will need to be tested for the virus. Please refer to the section "What if I develop symptoms" above.

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 to be put through to the department on 1300 651 160.

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

For national updates: https://www.health.gov.au/news/latest-information-about-novel-coronavirus

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

WHO resources https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirusTo 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 <public.health@dhhs.vic.gov.au>.

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Available at Victorian Coronavirus website < https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorian-public-coronavirus-disease-covid-19>