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Managing COVID-19 at home: A guide for family and friend carers

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Carers NSW guide for managing COVID-19 at home

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Introduction

As COVID-19 becomes more present in the community, it is increasingly important to be aware of how to manage COVID-19 at home if you or the person that you care for contract the virus and are not unwell enough to go to hospital. This guide includes a series of key resources to assist carers in New South Wales (NSW) to prepare for managing COVID-19 at home.

As the COVID-19 situation is rapidly evolving in NSW, this guide will provide downloadable fact sheets available at the time of publication, as well as clickable hyperlinks to where you can find the most up-to-date official information.

Carers NSW also provides regular updates through the [news page of our website](#), our [carer resources hub](#), and our [Facebook page](#).

If you would like additional support in managing self-isolation as a carer, you can contact [Carer Gateway](#) on 1800 422 737, Monday to Friday 8:00am-5:00pm.

Section 1: Preparing for COVID-19

With COVID-19 cases currently on the rise in NSW, it is important to prepare for the possibility that you or the person you care for may contract COVID-19, or be exposed to someone with COVID-19, and need to self-isolate at some point.

Self-isolation is when you stay in your home or accommodation to prevent contact with people outside of your household. It may also involve separating yourself from other people within your household. If you or the person that you care for have COVID-19 or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, self-isolation is an important step for minimising the risk of spreading COVID-19 to others.

Self-isolating can present a range of practical and emotional challenges for anyone, however, carers and the people they care for may experience additional challenges managing COVID-19 at home

Planning ahead will help to ensure that you and the person you care for have access to what you need if one of you becomes unwell.

Carers NSW recommends that all carers consider:

- Completing the Carer Gateway [Emergency Care Plan](#) or another similar resource, in case you become too sick to care or need to self-isolate away from the person you care for.
- Using the Carers NSW [Preparing for self-isolation: A checklist for carers](#), ensure that you have access to essentials as needed.



Australian Government



Emergency care plan

1800 422 737
www.carergateway.gov.au





Australian Government



Emergency care plan

An emergency care plan has all the information about the person you care for in one place, so you can get it quickly and easily.

An emergency care plan makes it easy for someone to take over from you in a hurry.

Instructions

1. Fill in your emergency care plan

- It should have all the information someone else would need to know to look after the person you care for
- If you need to add more information, you can write it on extra pages and keep them with your plan
- If you need help filling in your emergency care plan, call Carer Gateway on **1800 422 737**

2. Save your emergency care plan

If you have downloaded the plan and filled it in:

- Save the plan to your computer or phone
- Print out copies of the plan

If you have asked for a printed copy of the plan and filled it in:

- Use a photocopier to make copies of the plan
- Keep a copy of the plan somewhere safe and easy to see in your home
- Take a copy with you when you leave home or travel with the person you care for

3. Share your emergency care plan

- You can give people a printed copy or email it to them if you have saved it on your computer
- Give a copy to each of your emergency contacts
- Give a copy to your doctor, and anyone else who may need to know what to do

Remember to update this plan if your information changes. This emergency care plan and information for carers is available from Carer Gateway.

1800 422 737
www.carergateway.gov.au



Australian Government



Emergency contacts

My details

Name

Relationship to the person I care for

Address

Phone

Details of the person I care for

Name

Age

Address

Phone

Language spoken

Person's condition, illness or disability

My emergency contacts

Name

Phone

Name

Phone

Name

Phone

If something happens to me

I would like my emergency contacts to

My emergency financial arrangements are

Remember to update this plan if your information changes.
This emergency care plan and information for carers is
available from Carer Gateway.

1800 422 737
www.carergateway.gov.au



Australian Government



Care needs

Care routine

The person I care for needs:

Full time care

Regular visits

Meals only

The person I care for needs help with:

Getting meals

Going to the toilet

Showering/bathing

Taking medicine

Getting out of bed/moving around

Mental health/emotional issues

When do they need help (what is their usual routine)

Food and diet, likes and dislikes, food allergies

Behaviours, calming strategies

Home and community care services

Organisation/service provided

Phone

Organisation/service provided

Phone

Organisation/service provided

Phone

Other information

Please attach extra notes if more space is needed

Remember to update this plan if your information changes. This emergency care plan and information for carers is available from Carer Gateway.

1800 422 737
www.carergateway.gov.au



Australian Government



Medical information and contacts

Medicines

Medicine allergies

Medicines, dose/timing, special instructions

Health information

Medicare number

Ambulance fund/Registration number

Health insurance fund/Registration number

Medic-Alert number

Safety Net number

Concession card type

Doctor

Name

Address

Phone

Pharmacist

Name

Address

Phone

Health professional/hospital

Organisation/service provided

Address

Phone

Remember to update this plan if your information changes. This emergency care plan and information for carers is available from Carer Gateway.

1800 422 737
www.carergateway.gov.au



Australian Government



Notes

Use this space to include any other important information

Remember to update this plan if your information changes.
This emergency care plan and information for carers is
available from Carer Gateway.

1800 422 737
www.carergateway.gov.au



Australian Government



Carer emergency card

A carer emergency card is a card you can carry in your wallet to let people know that you care for someone.

It's a good idea to carry an emergency card to make sure the person you care for will be looked after if something happens to you.

The person you care for should also carry a card in their wallet to let people know they are being cared for by you.

Instructions

1. Fill in the cards
2. Cut the cards out along the dotted lines
3. Fold the cards in half along the solid line
4. Put the carer card in your wallet
5. Give the other card to the person you care for, to put in their wallet or carry with them



I am a carer

My name: _____

I care for: _____

Relationship to me: _____



An Australian Government Initiative

Remember to update this card if your details change. Download a new card at www.carergateway.gov.au



In an emergency

Please contact the person below to make sure the person I care for is looked after

Name: _____

Relationship to me: _____

Phone number: _____



I have a carer

My name: _____

My carer: _____

Their phone number: _____



An Australian Government Initiative

Remember to update this card if your details change. Download a new card at www.carergateway.gov.au



I have a carer

My condition/s: _____

Care I require: _____

Other information:

Remember to update this plan if your information changes. This emergency care plan and information for carers is available from Carer Gateway.

1800 422 737
www.carergateway.gov.au

PREPARING FOR SELF-ISOLATION: A CHECKLIST FOR CARERS

SUGGESTED ITEMS FOR YOUR KIT

- Food, water and essentials such as continence products and medication
- Face masks
- Thermometer
- Handsanitiser and liquid soap
- Tissues
- Disposable medical gloves
- Pain relief - paracetamol
- Regular medication for 2 weeks
- Hydration options e.g. Electrolyte powders, sports drinks, icypoles for children
- Rapid antigen tests, if available
- Oximeter -optional but useful for older people and those with underlying medical conditions.
- Activities e.g. board games, puzzles, books, toys for children.
- Specialty food if required, including nutritional drinks and ready-to-eat food



THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Have you and your family had all recommended COVID-19 vaccine doses?
- Who do you need to notify if you have tested positive and are isolating?
- Who can safely deliver supplies to you if needed?
- Who can transport you to medical assistance or testing if you might be unwell?
- How will you and the person you care for stay entertained and manage stress?
- If living alone do you have a 'buddy' to check in on you?
- Do you have a plan for supporting the person you care for if you become very unwell?

IMPORTANT CONTACTS

- Emergencies only: 000
- Clinical support: COVID-19 Care at Home Support Line 1800 960 933
- Non-clinical support: Service NSW 13 77 88
- Practical and emotional support: Carer Gateway 1800 422 737
- Lifeline 13 11 14
- Your GP: _____
- Your emergency contact: _____



Section 2: Finding out if you need to self-isolate

With increased transmission of COVID-19 in the community, many carers are unsure when they or the person they care for should get tested for COVID-19, which type of test they should use, and what to do in the event of a positive test result.

Getting tested and self-isolating is only be legally required in specific circumstances, however, many carers have additional factors to consider, such as increased risks to the person they care for, and may choose to self-isolate at other times.

This section provides resources from NSW Health to help you determine if you or the person you care for may need to [get tested for COVID-19 and which test to access](#) and whether you or the person you care for may need to [self-isolate or get tested following exposure to COVID-19](#).



What COVID-19 test should I do?

When should I get a COVID-19 test?

1. **You have COVID-19 symptoms.** It is especially important if you are at higher risk of severe illness to get a test so you can access treatment earlier.
2. **You are at higher risk of severe illness and have been recently exposed to someone with COVID-19.** Early diagnosis means you can access treatment earlier.
3. **You are a household contact or have had a high or moderate risk exposure to someone with COVID-19.** This will help you know if you have COVID-19 sooner.

You do not need to test or self-isolate if you have had COVID-19 and been released from self-isolation in the last 12 weeks. If you are at higher risk of severe illness and your diagnosis was not confirmed by a PCR test, you should get a PCR test if you get symptoms.

See [information for people exposed to COVID-19](#) for more information about when to get tested.

Who is at higher risk of severe illness?

- People aged 60 years and older
- Pregnant women
- Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Pacific Islander people (from age 35 years and over)
- People with obesity, diabetes, serious cardiovascular disease, chronic lung disease (*including severe asthma requiring hospitalisation in last 12 months*), severe chronic liver or kidney disease, active cancer or who are immunocompromised
- Some people with a disability including those with a disability that affects their lungs, heart or immune system
- Residents of aged care and disability care facilities
- People aged 18 years and older who are unvaccinated

What COVID-19 test should I get?

There are **two different tests** you can get to check if you have COVID-19:

- a rapid antigen test (**RAT**) that you can do yourself
- a **PCR** test that is done at a testing clinic

If you are at higher risk of severe illness you should get a **PCR test** as they are more accurate. There are **treatments** available that can only be prescribed in the early stages of the disease. If you can't get a PCR test result quickly, do a rapid antigen test (if you have one) while you wait for the PCR test result.

If you are not at higher risk of severe illness, do a rapid antigen test unless your doctor tells you to have a PCR test.

Specific testing advice is available for residents of aged care facilities. Speak to your residential aged care provider if you have questions or see the [Protocol for RAT and PCR testing in residential aged care](#).

What do I do with the results?

PCR tests

- If you have a **positive PCR** test result, even if you don't have symptoms, you have COVID-19. You must follow the advice for people [testing positive to COVID-19 and managing COVID-19 safely at home](#).
- If you have a **negative PCR** test result you do not currently have COVID-19. If you have been recently exposed to a person with COVID-19, you need to continue to follow the self-isolation advice for [people exposed to COVID-19](#) as you may still be developing the infection.

Rapid antigen tests

If you have COVID-19 symptoms and:

- the rapid antigen test is **positive**, [register the result with Service NSW](#) and follow the advice for people [testing positive to COVID-19 and managing COVID-19 safely at home](#).
- the rapid antigen test is **negative** and you are at higher risk of severe illness, keep self-isolating until you get your PCR test result, as this will be the more accurate result.
- the rapid antigen test is **negative**, and you are not at higher risk of severe illness, have a PCR test right away or another rapid antigen test 24 hours later. Keep self-isolating until you get the results of your second test. If the second test is negative you do not have COVID-19. You should stay at home until you recover from your illness.

If you have no COVID-19 symptoms and:

- the rapid antigen test is **positive** [register the result with Service NSW](#) and follow the [testing positive advice](#). You can have a **PCR test** to confirm the result (as it is more accurate). If you do get a PCR test within 24 hours of your rapid antigen test and it is negative, you can stop self-isolating. Get another test if you develop symptoms.
- the rapid antigen test is **negative** you are unlikely to have COVID-19. If you are at **higher risk of severe illness** and have been recently exposed to COVID-19 in your household, you should have a **PCR test** right away. If the PCR test is **negative**, you must continue to isolate for 7 days, get another test at Day 6 and if you develop symptoms.

Information for people exposed to COVID-19

How will I know if I have been exposed to COVID-19?

COVID-19 is common in the community. We ask people with COVID-19 to tell the people they have spent time with from 2 days before they started having symptoms or 2 days before they tested positive (whichever came first) that they have COVID-19.

If you are told that you have been in contact with someone that has tested positive to COVID-19, you should use this advice to understand your risk and what you can do to protect yourself, your family and your community.

Who is at risk of getting infected?

The risk of getting COVID-19 increases:

- with the amount of time you spend with someone who has COVID-19 and how closely you interact with them
- when you are indoors (the risk is lower if you are outdoors)
- when you don't wear a mask (the risk is much lower if the person you are with also wears a mask).

Vaccination decreases the risk of getting COVID-19, but this protection reduces over time and can be less effective against certain variants of COVID-19. A booster vaccine will significantly increase your protection, against severe illness. Everyone should get their booster as soon as they are eligible.

To find a COVID-19 vaccination appointment near you, please visit the [COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic Finder](#).

How long am I at risk for?

After being exposed to someone with COVID-19 you are at risk of illness for 14 days. Most people who develop COVID-19 will get symptoms in the first 7 days, however some people will develop symptoms between day 7 and 14.

What should I do if I have been exposed to someone who has COVID-19?

Your risk of getting COVID-19 is based on the type of contact you had with a person who has COVID-19. When thinking about what steps you can take to reduce the risk to yourself and others, think about your personal circumstances, including the risk you could infect vulnerable people you live or work with, especially if they have conditions that make them more susceptible (for example, chronic illness, or undergoing chemotherapy).

If you live with someone who has COVID-19 you **must** follow the [NSW Health Household and Close Contact Guidelines](#).

If you were in contact with someone who has COVID-19 outside of your household (i.e. you don't live with them), please use the table below to assess your risk and take steps to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

All people exposed to someone with COVID-19 should monitor for [symptoms](#). If symptoms develop, [get tested for COVID-19](#) immediately. If you need to get tested and cannot access a rapid antigen test, you can get a test at a [testing clinic](#).

Take time to speak with your GP about your personal health circumstances. If you are at a [higher risk of severe illness](#) you may be eligible for certain treatments available that only work when used in the early stages of illness. Having these discussions with your doctor early can help you develop a plan for what to do if you get sick.

What if I have recently recovered from COVID-19?

Generally, you do not need to test or self-isolate if you have had COVID-19 and have been released from self-isolation in the last 12 weeks, because the risk of reinfection is low.

If you have any new [symptoms](#) in the 12 weeks since you have been released, you should stay home until they resolve. If you are at a [higher risk of severe illness](#) and have symptoms during this 12 week period, you should talk to your doctor as they may recommend that you get tested or have treatment.

For further information, see the [testing positive factsheet](#).

What are some examples of high and low risk exposures?

Use this table to assess your risk of COVID-19, and what to do, if you are told you are a contact of someone with COVID-19.

About you	Risk of COVID-19	What do I need to do?
<p>I live with someone who has COVID-19 (I am a household contact)</p> <p>OR</p> <p>I have been formally notified by NSW Health that I am a close contact (I am a close contact)</p>	High	<p>All household contacts and close contacts must comply with the NSW Health Household and Close Contact Guidelines.</p> <p>For 7 days after a person in your household has tested positive you must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-isolate and have a COVID-19 test if you have any symptoms • Not visit high-risk settings (healthcare, aged care, disability care or correctional facilities) unless you need care, or there are exceptional circumstances and you have obtained the permission of the facility to visit (e.g. for end of life visits). • Tell your workplace or educational facility that someone you live with has tested positive to COVID-19, and seek their approval before returning to work or school if you cannot work or study from home. • If you are over 12 years of age you must wear a mask when you are in an indoor setting that is not your own home, including work and tertiary education settings (such as TAFE and University). School and early childhood education settings may have their own guidance for students which should be followed. Masks can be removed in some circumstances (for example, if you have a physical or mental health condition or disability that makes wearing a mask unsuitable, or if you are eating or drinking). A summary of these reasons can be found here. <p>To help reduce the spread of COVID-19 for at least 7 days after a person in your household tests positive, it is also strongly recommended that you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work or study from home where you can. • Avoid contact with people at high risk of severe illness as much as possible. • Avoid large or crowded indoor gatherings where you will be in contact with groups of people that you don't live with, where possible. • Where practicable, do a rapid antigen test if you need to attend an indoor gathering with people that you don't live with, even if you do not have symptoms (including in workplaces and schools).

<p>I spent a long time with someone who has COVID-19 (e.g. I stayed overnight at their house or I spent the evening indoors at the house) or I interacted closely with someone who has COVID-19 and we were not wearing masks (e.g. we drove a long distance together, or I looked after children who are now positive.)</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>As you are at high risk of COVID-19, it is strongly recommended that you follow the steps above for household and close contacts.</p> <p>While this is not mandatory, this is important in helping to reduce the spread of COVID-19, and protect people around you.</p> <p>Monitor closely for symptoms, and if these develop at any time, get tested for COVID-19 and isolate until you receive a negative result.</p>
<p>I spent some time with a person who has COVID-19 (e.g. we had dinner together or met at a pub, club or other social function.)</p>	<p>Moderate</p>	<p>It is recommended that you follow the steps for household contacts where possible.</p> <p>In particular, avoid entering high risk settings, and visiting people at higher risk of severe illness where you can.</p> <p>Monitor for symptoms, and if these develop at any time, get tested for COVID-19 and isolate until you receive a negative result.</p>
<p>I had brief or distanced contact with a person with COVID-19 (e.g. I dropped off shopping, or we went for a walk outdoors), or I received a case alert in the Service NSW App.</p>	<p>Low</p>	<p>Keep taking steps to reduce the spread of COVID-19, such as social distancing, regularly washing your hands, and wearing a mask if you go to crowded or poorly ventilated areas.</p> <p>Monitor for symptoms, and if these develop at any time, get tested for COVID-19 and isolate until you receive a negative result.</p>

Who is at higher risk of severe illness?

- People aged 60 years and older
- Pregnant women
- Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Pacific Islander people (from age 35 years and over)
- People with obesity, diabetes, serious cardiovascular disease, chronic lung disease (including severe asthma requiring hospitalisation the last 12 months), severe chronic liver or kidney disease, active cancer or who are immunocompromised
- Some people with a disability including those with a disability that affects their lungs, heart or immune system
- Residents of aged care and disability care facilities
- People aged 18 years and older who are unvaccinated

If you have symptoms and are at higher risk of severe illness, a PCR test is recommended.

For additional information for workplace-based exposures refer to [NSW Government - Guidance for businesses with a worker who tests positive for COVID-19](#).

How can we all help slow the spread of COVID-19?

There are simple steps we can all take to help slow the spread of COVID-19.

- Don't go anywhere if you have symptoms of COVID-19. Get tested immediately and self-isolate until you receive a negative result.
- If you have been exposed to COVID-19, avoid high-risk settings (healthcare, aged care, disability care, correctional facilities) as much as possible in the first 7 days. If you have to visit one of these settings, we encourage you to do a rapid antigen test just beforehand and wear a mask while visiting.

- Stay 1.5 metres away from other people where possible and avoid crowds
- Wear a mask
- Clean your hands regularly with hand sanitiser or soap and running water for 20 seconds
- Hold social gatherings outdoors or in well-ventilated areas, with limited numbers

For more information:

For further information on supports available in self-isolation, see the [Self-Isolation Guideline](#).

For more information about testing for COVID-19 see [What COVID-19 test should I do?](#)

Help in your language

If you need an interpreter, please contact the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) National on 131 450, This service is free and confidential.

Section 3: Self-isolating safely

If you are legally required to self-isolate due to COVID-19, you must follow the guidelines provided by NSW Health, aligning with the most recent updates to the [NSW Public Health Order](#). If you choose to self-isolate to reduce your risk of catching COVID-19, the following resources may still be helpful.

This section includes the [NSW Health COVID-19 self-isolation guideline and support](#) which provides clear guidance on self-isolation requirements and practical steps that you must follow. It also includes information on [testing positive to COVID-19 and managing COVID-19 safely at home](#) and [recovery from COVID-19](#), including when you can leave self-isolation.

NSW Health COVID-19 Self-Isolation Guideline

Self-isolation is an important way to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

People who test positive to COVID-19 on a PCR or rapid antigen test must follow this Guideline and self-isolate for 7 days.

This Guideline helps explain the current [Public Health \(COVID-19 Self-Isolation\) Order](#) and should be read in conjunction with the [Testing positive to COVID-19 and managing COVID-19 safely at home](#) fact sheet.

Household and close contacts must follow the advice in the [NSW Health Household and Close Contact Guidelines](#).

What is self-isolation?

Self-isolation is when you stay in your home or accommodation away from other people. It helps stop the spread of COVID-19 to the people around you.

Self-isolation means:

- not going to work or school
- not going to any public places (e.g. shops, parks, beaches)
- not using public transport
- not having any visitors in your home, unless they are providing healthcare, emergency maintenance or emergency services.

You are only allowed to leave self-isolation to:

- get a COVID-19 test
- seek urgent medical care
- avoid an emergency situation (including to avoid injury or escape the risk of harm from domestic violence).

How do I self-isolate from my household if I have COVID-19?

If you live with other people, you should stay separated from them during your self-isolation period.

Physically distance

This means:

- stay and sleep in a separate room
- use a separate bathroom if available
- do not be in the same room as another person.

Practice good hygiene

- Wash your hands with soap and water frequently or use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Wear a mask in shared areas or when caring for other members of your household
- Take extra care to remain separate from any members of your household who are elderly, immunocompromised or have medical conditions such as heart, lung or kidney problems.

What if I need to travel to my place of self-isolation?

If you have tested positive to COVID-19 and you need to travel, for example to your home or accommodation, you must do so in a private vehicle, cycle or walk. You cannot use taxis or ride share services. Do not use public transport or fly. You should wear a face mask and stay 1.5 metres away from other people.

Take simple steps to reduce the risk to others:

- Map the most direct route and identify safe rest break areas before you leave
- Avoid crowded areas and wear a mask if/when you need to take a break.

When travelling in a vehicle with others, you should:

- Sit in the back seat with the windows open (preferably in the passenger rear left seat) if you are not driving
- All wear a face mask that covers the nose and mouth at all times
- Sanitise your hands before you get into the vehicle.

What if I have shared care arrangements?

Moving between households, even for shared caring arrangements, is not recommended. People should only move to another household after they have completed their self-isolation period.

What if I am self-isolating in a multi unit dwelling (eg. apartment building or hotel)?

If you are self-isolating in a building with other people in it, you will need to take extra steps to protect other people:

- Remain inside your own unit/room. Avoid shared laundry facilities or any other common areas such as a gym, pool or shared outdoor area
- Do not open your door without wearing a mask if there are shared corridors
- Open windows if possible/safe to maximise fresh air and natural ventilation
- Arrange someone to pick up rubbish from outside your door. The person collecting your rubbish should wear gloves and a surgical mask while doing this and thoroughly wash their hands afterwards
- Wash your clothes inside your own unit; other people should not do your laundry
- Ask for any deliveries, including food, to be left outside your door. Do not open the door until the delivery person has left and the corridor is empty.

Staying in a hotel / accommodation

If you are a guest in a hotel/accommodation, you should take additional precautions to those listed above.

- If you must enter any communal areas for any reason wear a mask and maintain physical distance between yourself and others
- You must remain inside your room or unit for the self-isolation period. You should not let staff enter your room.

What support is available while I am in self-isolation?

If you have questions about self-isolation contact NSW Health Isolation Support Line on 1800 943 553 or call Service NSW on 13 77 88.

Food and other essential supplies

If you need food or other essential supplies (e.g. medication) during self-isolation:

- Ask family or friends to pick up supplies as needed and leave them at your door
- Order supplies online.

If you have no other way of obtaining food or other essentials call the NSW Health Isolation Support Line on 1800 943 553 and you will be directed to Service NSW for assistance.

Other supports available

Mental health support

NSW Mental Health Line – 1800 011 511

Beyond Blue helpline – 1800 512 348

Lifeline – 13 11 14

Kids Helpline - 1800 55 1800

Service NSW [mental wellbeing resources](#)

Domestic violence support

National sexual assault and domestic violence helpline on 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732)

Visit [NSW Health website](#) for the latest advice.

NSW Health has partnered with [Sonder](#) which provides a personal wellbeing service with 24/7 access to multilingual chat and phone access to a range of mental health, medical and wellbeing support services.

Help in your language

For free help in your language, call the **Interpreter Service on 13 14 50**.

Testing positive to COVID-19 and managing COVID-19 safely at home

If you test positive with a rapid antigen test, you must:

1. Register your positive test on the [Service NSW website](#) so you can be linked to important health care support and advice based on your COVID-19 risk. If you or someone in your family can't register online, please call Service NSW on 13 77 88.

If you test positive with a PCR or rapid antigen test, you must:

1. Self-isolate immediately for 7 days. If you have a sore throat, runny nose, cough or shortness of breath after 7 days, please remain in self-isolation until 24 hours after your symptoms have resolved.
2. Tell people that you live with that you have tested positive to COVID-19, and self-isolate from them as much as possible. People in your household must follow the [NSW Health Household and Close Contact Guidelines](#) for at least 7 days after you tested positive.
3. Tell people you spent time with from the 2 days before you started having symptoms or 2 days before you tested positive (whichever came first) that you have COVID-19. This includes your social contacts, workplace and/or school.
4. Monitor your symptoms. If you are concerned you should call your GP, the NSW Health COVID-19 Care at Home Support Line on 1800 960 933 or the National Coronavirus Helpline on 1800 020 080. If symptoms become severe call Triple Zero (000) immediately.

How will my COVID-19 be managed?

When you register your positive rapid antigen test (RAT) result online or over the phone, you will be asked to answer questions that help us determine whether you are at higher risk of severe illness. If you had a positive PCR result, you will be sent a link to similar questions by SMS. Please reply to these questions as soon as you can.

You will also be sent advice on self-isolation and how to look after your illness at home. If you are at [higher risk of severe illness](#), NSW Health will ask you some more questions. This is to check if you're eligible for antiviral or other early treatment for COVID-19. You will need to provide the name of your GP or GP practice so NSW Health's clinical teams can contact them about your care.

If you are under 60 years of age, up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations, do not suffer from any chronic health conditions and are not pregnant, you can safely look after yourself at home. Most people with COVID-19 will have a mild illness and will recover in a few days or so, with some people having no symptoms at all. You can reach out to NSW Health for care or advice anytime during your illness. Most symptoms can be managed with:

- Bed rest
- Regular paracetamol and ibuprofen to relieve pain and fevers
- Throat lozenges for a sore throat
- Keeping hydrated with regular sips of water.

Continue to take any medications you have been prescribed as usual. If you are unsure about continuing to take your current medication or treatment, or have any concerns about your health, call your doctor.

Please contact your GP or call the **NSW Health COVID-19 Care at Home Support Line on 1800 960 933** if you are considered to be at higher risk of severe illness.

Who is at higher risk of severe illness?

- People aged 60 years and older
- Pregnant women (see [What if I am pregnant and have COVID-19?](#))
- Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Pacific Islander people (from age 35 years and over)
- People with obesity, diabetes, serious cardiovascular disease, chronic lung disease (including severe asthma requiring hospitalisation the last 12 months), severe chronic liver or kidney disease, active cancer or who are immunocompromised
- Some people with a disability including those with a disability that affects their lungs, heart or immune system
- Residents of aged care and disability care facilities
- People aged 18 years and older who are unvaccinated

Older age is a risk factor for serious illness, particularly when combined with significant underlying health conditions. There are effective treatments available for people at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

Monitor your symptoms

Ask yourself these questions three times every day (morning, afternoon and night):

Question	Answer no	Answer yes
Am I having trouble eating and drinking?	Continue to eat and drink normally.	Take frequent sips of water, Hydralyte or Gastrolyte. If you don't improve, call 1800 960 933 or your GP
Am I passing a lot less urine than normal?	Continue to stay hydrated.	Drink more water, Hydralyte or Gastrolyte. If you don't improve, call 1800 960 933 or your GP
Do I feel a little dizzy or lightheaded when walking around the room?	Continue to follow NSW Health advice for managing COVID-19 at home	Drink more water, Hydralyte or Gastrolyte. If you don't improve, call 1800 960 933 or your GP
Do I feel severely dizzy, drowsy or confused?	Continue to follow NSW Health advice for managing COVID-19 at home	Call Triple Zero (000) immediately and tell the ambulance staff you have COVID-19
Am I having trouble breathing or feel chest pressure or pain lasting more than 10 minutes?	Continue to follow NSW Health advice for managing COVID-19 at home	Call Triple Zero (000) immediately and tell the ambulance staff you have COVID-19
Do I feel like I might faint when I stand?	Continue to follow NSW Health advice for managing COVID-19 at home	Call Triple Zero (000) immediately and tell the ambulance staff you have COVID-19

If you need other clinical support or have non-urgent health related questions during isolation, call the **NSW Health COVID-19 Care at Home Support Line on 1800 960 933**.

What do I need to do?

1. Self-isolate for 7 days

You must self-isolate at home for 7 days from the date you got tested, even if you are up to date with your COVID-19 vaccinations. Self-isolation means staying in your home or accommodation and remaining separated from others. Please see the NSW Health COVID-19 [Self-Isolation Guideline](#) for further information on how to self-isolate and what support is available if you need it.

Call the NSW Health Isolation Support Line on 1800 943 553 if you need practical assistance during self-isolation.

2. Tell the people you live with that you have tested positive

Your household contacts must follow the advice in the [NSW Health Household and Close Contact Guidelines](#).

If one of your household members has a positive test result at any time, they are now a case. They must isolate for at least 7 days after they tested positive, and follow the information provided in this fact sheet.

3. Tell your social contacts that you have tested positive

You may have been infectious from two days before you developed symptoms, or two days before you tested positive if you did not have symptoms.

You should tell any social contacts that you spent time with whilst infectious that you have tested positive. This includes friends and other people you have met socially, such as friends you had dinner with, people you met up with at a pub, club or social function, friends or family who visited your home.

Tell your contacts to assess their risk and next steps using the [Information for people exposed to COVID-19 factsheet](#).

4. Tell your workplace or educational facility that you have tested positive

You must also tell your work manager or education facility head/relevant staff member that you have tested positive for COVID-19 if you were onsite whilst infectious.

Tell them the date of your test, the date you got sick (if you have symptoms), and the days you were at work/school whilst infectious. They should use this information to assess the risk to your fellow workers or students. Your workplace or school may inform them that they have been exposed to COVID-19, and what action they should take.

You can tell your manager by phone or text, or ask a work friend to tell them for you. If you have attended an educational facility, you can call the main phone number for the campus you attend.

What if I am pregnant and have COVID-19?

Pregnant women, who are 14 weeks or more, have a higher risk of complications from COVID-19.

If you test positive to COVID-19 and you are more than 14 weeks pregnant, it is important that you tell your maternity care provider. This may be your GP, midwife, obstetrician or local maternity service.

Most pregnant women will be able to safely stay at home while they have COVID-19. During this time, it is important to:

- Have plenty of fluids, like you would with a regular cold or flu. If you feel unwell, paracetamol can also be taken to help with symptoms. Ibuprofen is not recommended to take while you are pregnant. It is important to mobilise regularly to reduce your risk of developing blood clots.
- It is important to keep a close eye on your baby's movements. Call your maternity care provider immediately **if your baby's movements change** or if you experience:
 - vaginal bleeding
 - abdominal pain
 - constant clear watery vaginal discharge
 - contractions any time before 37 weeks
 - persistent fever
 - headaches
 - sudden swelling of your face and hands
 - you are in labour
 - have any serious concerns about your pregnancy.
- If you have difficulty breathing, develop chest pressure or pain, have severe headaches or dizziness you should call 000 immediately. Ensure that you tell them you have COVID-19 and are pregnant.
- After recovering from COVID-19 it is important to continue your regular antenatal care. If you have missed an antenatal care appointment during your self-isolation, reschedule as soon as possible.

How do I manage a baby or child with COVID-19?

Most children who test positive for COVID-19 can be safely cared for at home by their usual household carers, even if they are not vaccinated. People with COVID-19 should separate from the rest of their household as much as they can. When caring for your child with COVID-19 at home:

- Dress your child in appropriate clothing, so that they are comfortable – not sweating or shivering.
- Give your child plenty of fluids to drink. They may not feel like drinking much so will need your help and encouragement.
- If you are breastfeeding or formula feeding your baby may want more frequent feeds. Breastfeeding is safe to continue if you and/or your baby has COVID-19.
- Encourage them to rest and not overdo it.
- Use paracetamol or ibuprofen, only if you think your child is in pain or appears uncomfortable with a fever. Follow the instructions on the label, and do not give more of these medicines than is recommended in a 24-hour period, as this may be harmful for children.
- Watch your child for signs that their illness is getting worse.

Monitor your child's condition and call your GP or **NSW Health COVID-19 Care at Home Support Line on 1800 960 933** or the **National Coronavirus Helpline on 1800 020 080** if you notice:

- persistent fever (>39°C) which is not responding to treatment
- mild breathlessness
- drinking less than half of what they would normally drink
- urine output less than half of usual volume, and urine dark in colour
- moderate vomiting or diarrhoea
- unable to stand or walk.

If you are concerned that your child is seriously unwell, has difficulty breathing, is severely dehydrated or fainting, please call Triple Zero (000) immediately and inform the operator that your child has COVID-19.

When can I leave self-isolation?

If you have no symptoms on Day 7

You must self-isolate for 7 days from the day you were tested. You can only leave self-isolation after 7 days if you do not have a sore throat, runny nose, cough or shortness of breath. For example, if you were tested at 10am on Tuesday, you can leave isolation at 10am on the following Tuesday if you do not have any of these symptoms. You do not need to test before leaving self-isolation in NSW.

A link to your medical clearance notice will be sent via SMS from NSW Health. Do not delete this SMS. Click the link in the SMS and download your medical clearance notice. You may be asked to provide evidence of release from self-isolation by your employer, education facility or if travelling internationally.

Wear a mask when near or talking to other people and avoid visiting high risk settings (health care, aged care, disability care or correctional facilities) for a further 3 days. If you work in one of these settings speak to your employer before returning. If you have a severely weakened immune system (such as you are a transplant recipient or are receiving chemotherapy) you should take these additional precautions for a further 4 days (a total of 7 days following release from isolation).

If you have symptoms on Day 7

If you have a sore throat, runny nose, cough or shortness of breath in the last 24 hours of your isolation, please remain in isolation until 24 hours after your symptoms have resolved. If you are not getting better or you are concerned, call your GP.

Wear a mask when near or talking to other people and avoid visiting high risk settings (health care, aged care, disability care or correctional facilities) for a further 3 days after you leave isolation. If you work in one of these settings speak to your employer before returning. If you have a severely weakened immune system (such as you are a transplant recipient or are receiving chemotherapy) you should take these additional precautions for a further 4 days (a total of 7 days following release from isolation).

If you have other symptoms after 7 days (e.g. fever, headaches) which are not getting better you can leave isolation but you should contact your GP.

If you are under the care of a clinical team, your team will tell you when you will be released from isolation.

What happens after I have been released from self-isolation?

Routine COVID-19 testing (such as workplace and school surveillance testing) is not recommended for 12 weeks after you are released from self-isolation.

Generally, you do not need to test or self-isolate if you have had COVID-19 and have been released from self-isolation in the last 12 weeks, because the risk of reinfection is low.

If you have any new [symptoms](#) in the 12 weeks since you have been released, you should stay home until they resolve. If you are at a [higher risk of severe illness](#) and have symptoms during this 12 week period, you should talk to your doctor as they may recommend that you get tested or have treatment

What if I am exposed to someone with COVID-19 again?

People who have recovered from COVID-19 have a low risk of getting it again in the 12 weeks after you are released as most people develop some immunity (ability to fight the disease).

If you come into contact with someone with COVID-19 within 12 weeks after you are released, you will generally not need to self-isolate or get a test. If you come into contact with someone with COVID-19 more than 12 weeks after you are released, you will need to follow the advice in the [Information for people exposed to COVID-19](#) and [Get tested for COVID-19](#) factsheets.

How soon should I get vaccinated?

A temporary exemption from vaccination applies for six weeks from the date of your medical clearance notice. This exemption is valid in NSW only. If you need to be vaccinated for employment, schooling, or other activities in another jurisdiction, please check the rules that apply in that state or territory.

If you are eligible for a booster vaccination, you can get it once you have fully recovered following a confirmed infection, but it's best to wait until around 4-6 weeks after the onset of infection. If you are [eligible for an additional winter booster dose](#), you can receive it 4 months after a confirmed infection. For further information, see the [COVID-19 vaccines: Frequently asked questions](#) and the [NSW Health Booster vaccination: Frequently asked questions](#).

What support is available while I am in self-isolation?

Mental health support

- NSW Mental Health Line – 1800 011 511
- Beyond Blue helpline – 1800 512 348
- Lifeline – 13 11 14
- Kids Helpline – 1800 55 1800
- Service NSW [mental wellbeing resources](#)

Domestic violence support

- National sexual assault and domestic violence helpline on 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732)

NSW Health has partnered with [Sonder](#) which provides a personal wellbeing service with 24/7 access to multilingual chat and phone access to a range of mental health, medical and wellbeing support services.

Help in your language

If you need an interpreter, please contact the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) National on 131 450, This service is free and confidential.

Section 4: Managing practical challenges when self-isolating

Carers may face a range of practical challenges while self-isolating, including difficulty accessing essentials and financial hardship. Some carers may also need to find alternative caring arrangements if they are too unwell to care, or need to self-isolate from the person they care.

If you are struggling to access essential food, medication and other goods, the following resources may be helpful:

- Information on accessing [groceries](#) from IDEAS
- Information on accessing [medications](#) from IDEAS

If COVID-19 symptoms or self-isolation are preventing you from carrying out your usual care tasks, you may need to organise alternative support arrangements for the person you care for. Carers NSW fact sheet [Alternative care arrangements during COVID-19](#) contains some suggestions for how to do this.

Information about [financial assistance](#) is also available from the Australian and NSW Governments, you can also contact Service NSW for assistance with accessing support on 13 77 88.

Alternative care arrangements during COVID-19

Last updated 13 January 2022

If you have COVID-19 and become too sick to care or need to self-isolate, you may need to organise alternative care arrangements for the person you care for. What this looks like will depend on whether the person you care for has COVID-19, as well as what level of care they require, what formal services they have in place and what other supports are available.

Planning ahead

It is important to plan ahead if you can, so that if you are unable to provide care due to COVID-19 you are confident the person you care will get the support they need. Recording the care needs of the person you care for and their emergency contacts through the [Carer Gateway Emergency Care Plan](#) is a good place to start.

Starting discussions with the person you care for, their formal service providers, and your family members, friends and neighbours ahead of time will also help you put alternative arrangements in place more quickly if you need to.

Alternative care arrangements for an older person

- Contact family members, friends or neighbours who may be able to assist with specific care tasks or step in to care while you self-isolate or recover.
- If the person you care for receives aged care services, contact their service providers directly to see whether additional or alternative support is available.
- If the person you care for does not have any formal services in place, contact [My Aged Care](#) on **1800 200 422** to see if they can offer support.
- If you are not able to organise additional services or help from others, contact your local [Carer Gateway](#) Service Provider on **1800 422 737** for advice and assistance.

Alternative care arrangement for a person with disability

- Contact family members, friends or neighbours who may be able to assist with specific care tasks or step in to care while you self-isolate or recover.
- If the person you care for receives disability services, contact their service providers directly to see whether additional or alternative support is available.
- If the person you care for receives services funded through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and their NDIS plan does not meet their current needs, contact your Support Coordinator or Local Area Coordinator, or phone the [National Disability Insurance Agency](#) on **1800 800 110** to request an urgent plan review.
- If you are not able to organise additional services or help from others, contact your local [Carer Gateway](#) Service Provider on **1800 422 737** for advice and assistance.

Support from Carer Gateway

If the person you care does not have any formal services in place, is not eligible for the services above, and cannot rely on other family members, friends or neighbours for additional support, [Carer Gateway](#) may be able to assist. Contact your local Carer Gateway Service Provider on **1800 422 737** to find out what support may be available.

Please note that all care services are currently under immense pressure due to increased demand for support and many workers having to self-isolate.