

Novel Coronavirus 2019 – home isolation information for people who are well

What is Coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a group of viruses that can affect humans and animals. In humans, coronaviruses can cause mild illness, such as the common cold and gastrointestinal infections, as well as more severe illness, such as that caused by SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) and MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome).

There is an outbreak of a new strain of coronavirus called 'novel coronavirus' or '2019nCoV'. This has so far mostly only affected people who live in/have visited mainland China, or those who have had close contact with sick people with the novel coronavirus infection.

Why do I need home isolation?

There is emerging information that some people may be infectious for a short period before they develop symptoms or have minor symptoms. While this is believed to be uncommon, it does mean that close contacts of confirmed cases and recent travellers from mainland China (not including Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan), may be infectious before they develop obvious symptoms.

For these reasons, as of 1 February, people returning from mainland China (excluding Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan) must isolate themselves at home for 14 days after leaving China. This also applies to those who have transited through mainland China.

Close contacts of confirmed cases must also be isolated in their home for 14 days after their last contact (exposure) with the infectious person.

If you returned to Australia from Hubei Province, prior to 1 February 2020, the advice remains that you need to self isolate for 14 days from the time of leaving Hubei Province.

Being isolated at home means that you need to stay at home for the full period. You cannot go to work, school, or public areas, and should not use public transportation, ride share or taxis. Visitors to the home should be discouraged.

Do I need to wear a mask inside my home?

You do not need to wear a mask while you are inside your home unless you become unwell with symptoms. Early symptoms include chills, body aches, sore throat, headaches, fever or cough.

How do I keep the people I live with safe from the infection?

Practising good hand and respiratory hygiene is the best defence against the spread of the virus.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser if your hands are not visibly dirty. Do this before handling food, before and after eating as well as after using the toilet. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with others.
- Cough/sneeze into your elbow or directly into a tissue, throw the tissue in a bin, and wash your hands.

Do the people I live with need to be isolated?

The people you live with and other close contacts do not need to be isolated, unless they are also close contacts or have returned from China. The people you live with should also practise good hand hygiene.

What happens if I develop symptoms?

Monitor your health until 14 days after you were last exposed to an infectious person or when you were last in China.

The key signs and symptoms are fever, cough and shortness of breath. Other early symptoms include chills, body aches, sore throat and headaches.

If you develop any of these symptoms take the following steps:

- Call Communicable Disease Control (CDC), ACT Health on (02) 5124 9213 during business hours or by paging (02) 9962 4155 after hours. CDC will assess and advise on what to do next.
- If you cannot contact CDC, contact a doctor to make an appointment. When you call the doctor's practice, tell the staff if that you were exposed to an infectious person or that you recently travelled from mainland China. They can then plan for when you arrive to prevent spread of infection to others.
- Keep yourself away from other people as much as possible (e.g. in a different room).
- Wear a surgical mask (if you have one) over your nose and mouth.
- Do not travel on public transport or rideshare and do not attend any public places.
- **If you have difficulty breathing or are seriously unwell and it is an emergency, call 000 immediately. Alert ambulance staff of your travel/contact history.**

Are there any special cleaning requirements?

There are no special cleaning requirements. However, it is recommended that surfaces which are touched regularly, such as door handles, kitchen and bathroom areas and phones are cleaned frequently using detergent and water or a detergent-based cleaner, such as Spray N Wipe™.

How do I shop for food?

You may need more groceries while you are isolated at home. If the people you live with are unable to get groceries, or if you live alone, friends or family living outside of your household can deliver groceries to your home. They should leave the groceries at your door.

Some grocery stores offer home delivery, if groceries are ordered online, including the main supermarket chains. Groceries should be left at your front door. If your groceries must be signed for, ideally this should be done by someone you live with who is not in isolation. If this is not possible, you should wear a mask and wash your hands before answering the door.

How do I get my medications?

If you know you will run out of your medications while you need to remain isolated at home, you should arrange ahead of time for your medications to be delivered to your home, by a family member, friend or your usual pharmacy.

Tell them you are isolating yourself at home and to notify you when they arrive at your home but to leave the medications at your front door.

How do I keep cool on hot days?

- Drink plenty of fluids and avoid dehydration. Check with your doctor how much you should drink if you are on limited fluids or fluid pills. Water is the best fluid to drink. Avoid beverages which contain caffeine or alcohol.
- Wear light-weight clothing.
- Take a shower, bath or sponge bath.
- Eat regular, light meals.
- Sleep in the coolest part of the home.
- Keep air circulating and use air conditioning if available. When there is also outdoor smoke present, only use an evaporative cooler if the system is filtered.

How do I keep spirits up during isolation?

Home isolation can be distressing, particularly for young children. Suggestions include:

- Read information about the novel coronavirus from reliable sources, such as the [ACT Health website](https://www.health.act.gov.au).

- Talk to the other members of the family about the infection. Understanding the novel coronavirus can reduce anxiety.
- Maintain a daily routine, as much as possible.
- Maintain a positive attitude. Think about how you've managed in other difficult situations and reassure yourself that you will cope with this situation as well. Home isolation is only temporary.
- Stay in touch with family members and friends by phone, email or social media.
- Exercise regularly as it helps to reduce stress. Options include yoga, floor exercises, dancing, exercise DVDs or online videos, walking around the backyard, and use of a stationary exercise bike (if you have one).

How do I reduce boredom during isolation?

Being confined to your home can cause boredom, stress and conflict. Suggestions include:

- Arrange with your employer to work from home, if possible.
- Ask your child's school to provide assignments, worksheets and homework by post or email.
- Reassure young children using age-appropriate language.
- Consider each other's needs. Make sure everyone has the opportunity to have some time alone during the day.
- Don't rely too much on technology or television.
- Treat home isolation as an opportunity to do those things you usually don't have time for such as reading, drawing, board games and craft.
- Accept that conflict and arguments may occur. Try to resolve them as soon as possible. For young children, distraction may help.

For further assistance

If you have more questions or need help while isolated at home, you can contact:

- National Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080 from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 5pm Saturday, or
- Communicable Disease Control, ACT Health on (02) 5124 9213 during business hours or by paging (02) 9962 4155 after hour

Accessibility

If you have difficulty reading a standard printed document and would like an alternative format, please phone 13 22 81.



If English is not your first language and you need the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS), please call 13 14 50.

For further accessibility information, visit: www.health.act.gov.au/accessibility

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