

Novel Coronavirus 2019 – home isolation information when unwell (suspected and confirmed cases)

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.

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

Infection by novel coronavirus can be confirmed by a laboratory test. A suspected case of coronavirus is someone with symptoms who has been tested and is waiting for the results.

People suspected of being infected or confirmed to be infected with novel coronavirus, if not requiring admission to hospital, must also remain isolated at home until ACT Health tells them it is ok to come out of isolation.

Who can be isolated at home?

Home isolation arrangements for people who are suspected or confirmed to have novel coronavirus are appropriate in the following circumstances:

- you are well enough to receive care at home;
- you have appropriate caregivers at home;
- there is a separate bedroom where you can recover without sharing an immediate space with others;
- you have access to food and other necessities are available;
- you (and anyone who lives in the same home as you) have access to the recommended personal protective equipment (at a minimum, gloves and facemask); and
- you do not live with household members who may be at increased risk of complications from novel coronavirus infection (e.g. people >65 years old, young children, pregnant women, people who are immunocompromised or who have chronic heart, lung, or kidney conditions).

Being isolated at home means that you need to stay at home. You cannot leave home to go to work, school, or public areas, and should not use public transportation, rideshare or taxis.

Visitors who do not have an essential need to be in the home should not visit while you are in isolation.

Do I need to wear a mask inside my home?

You should wear a mask while you are inside your home when other people are present. If you cannot wear a surgical mask, the people who live with you should not stay in the same room as you and should wear a mask if they enter your room.

What about other people in my home?

Only household members who are essential for caring for you should stay in the home. Other people living in the home should consider staying elsewhere if possible. Elderly people and those with compromised immune systems or chronic health conditions should stay away.

If you are sharing the home with others, you should stay in a different room from them, or be separated as much as possible. You should use a separate bathroom, if available.

Avoid shared or communal areas and wear a surgical mask when moving through these areas.

Surfaces in shared areas (such as door handles, taps and benches) should be cleaned daily with household disinfectant or a diluted bleach solution (see the cleaning section below).

Do carers or household members need to be isolated as well?

If you are a confirmed case, the people you live with and other close contacts will need to be isolated at home. They will be contacted by CDC and told how long they need to be isolated.

If you are suspected of being infected and are waiting on test results, the people you live with may need to be isolated even if they don't have any symptoms. This will be determined by Communicable Disease Control (CDC), ACT Health on a case-by-case basis. You will be contacted and told whether your household members and close contacts need to be isolated.

If they do not require isolation and become unwell, they should contact 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 they have difficulty breathing or are seriously unwell and it is an emergency, they should call triple zero (000) immediately and alert ambulance staff to their travel/contact history.

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

Practising good hand, respiratory and general hygiene are the best defences against the spread of the virus.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water is not available, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitiser that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry. Soap and water should be used if your hands are visibly dirty. Wash your hands before handling food, before and after eating, after using the toilet, before entering rooms and touching other peoples' possessions. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with others.
- Cough and sneeze into your elbow or directly into a tissue, throw the tissue in a lined bin, and wash your hands.
- Avoid sharing household items such as cutlery, dishes, utensils, drinking glasses, bedding towels and other items with other people in your home. You should wash these items thoroughly with soap and water or in the dishwasher after using them.
- If the weather allows, make sure shared spaces in the home have good airflow by an open window or air conditioning.

What if my symptoms get worse?

If your symptoms worsen or you get new symptoms take the following steps:

- Call 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, call the doctor who cared for you and remind the staff you have been isolated at home because you are a suspected or confirmed case of novel coronavirus, so that they can best advise you on what to do.
- When traveling to an appointment keep yourself away from other people as much as possible.
- Wear a surgical mask 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 triple zero (000) immediately. Alert ambulance staff to your travel/contact history.**

I am a caregiver or household member – how can I prevent infection?

Wash your hands often and thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser with at least 60% alcohol if your hands are not visibly dirty, particularly if you come in contact with the case or with items handled by them. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

If the weather allows, make sure shared spaces in the home have good airflow, by an open window or air conditioning.

Wear a disposable surgical facemask, plastic apron, and gloves when you touch or have contact with the person's blood, body fluids and/or secretions such as sweat, saliva, sputum, nasal mucous, vomit, urine or diarrhoea. Throw out disposable facemasks, gowns, and gloves after using them and do not reuse them. Wash your hands immediately after removing your facemask, gown and gloves.

I am a caregiver or household member - are there any special cleaning requirements?

Frequently touched surfaces

Clean all frequently touched surfaces daily, such as kitchen benches, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets and bedside tables. Also clean any surfaces that may have blood, body fluids and/or secretions or excretions on them using disposable kitchen towel. Clean using detergent and water, or a detergent-based cleaner followed by a household disinfectant or diluted bleach solution. Clean and dry surfaces before applying disinfectant.

A bleach-based disinfectant (1000 ppm) can be made by adding 1 tablespoon of bleach to 4 cups of cold water. Make this daily. If using bleach as disinfectant, apply to surface, leave for 10 minutes and then rinse with clean water. A one-step or combination cleaning and disinfectant product can also be used.

Read the labels of cleaning products and follow recommendations on product labels. Labels contain instructions for safe and effective use of the cleaning products including precautions you should take when applying the product. Make sure the area is well ventilated. Wear disposable gloves and ideally a plastic apron when cleaning surfaces, clothing or bedding, dispose of the gloves and apron in the bin when finished and wash your hands.

Laundry

Wash laundry thoroughly. Immediately remove and wash clothes or bedding that have blood, body fluids and/or secretions or excretions on them and wear disposable gloves. Wash your hands immediately after removing your gloves. Read and follow directions on labels of laundry detergent. In general, wash and dry with the warmest temperatures recommended on clothing

labels. This should be above 60 degrees Celsius. If possible, tumble dry and iron using the highest setting compatible with the fabric.

Disposal of contaminated items

Place all used disposable gloves, gowns, facemasks, and other contaminated items in a lined container with the plastic rubbish bag tied when full before disposing of it with other household waste. Wash your hands immediately after handling these items.

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. The delivery instructions should state that groceries should be left at your front door. If your groceries must be signed for, someone else who is not in isolation should do this.

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 that contain caffeine or alcohol.
- Wear lightweight 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, avoid using an evaporative cooler.

How do I keep spirits up during isolation?

Home isolation can be distressing, particularly for young children. Suggestions for looking after your mental health and wellbeing include:

- Reading information about the novel coronavirus from reliable sources, such as the [ACT Health website](#).
- Talking to the other members of the family about the infection and how you're feeling. Understanding the novel coronavirus can reduce anxiety. Maintaining 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.

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.
- 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.

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 hours.

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

www.health.act.gov.au | Phone: 132281 |

© Australian Capital Territory, Canberra February 2020