

COVID-19 – home quarantine 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 disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus that is called 'COVID-19'. The outbreak originated in a province in China and has spread to many countries outside of China.

Why do I need home quarantine?

There is emerging information that some people may be infectious for a short period before they develop symptoms. While this is believed to be uncommon, it does mean that people with COVID-19 may be infectious before they develop obvious symptoms.

For this reason, people returning from mainland China (excluding Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan) or Iran must quarantine themselves at home for 14 days after leaving China or Iran. In addition, as of 5 March 2020, people returning from South Korea must quarantine themselves at home for 14 days after leaving South Korea. This advice includes those who have transited through mainland China, Iran or South Korea.

Close contacts of people who are confirmed to have COVID-19 must also be quarantined in their home for 14 days after their last contact (exposure) with the infectious person.

Being quarantined at home means that you need to stay at home for the full 14-day period. You cannot go to work, school, or public areas (such as shops or cafes/restaurants) and should not use public transport, ride share or taxis. You also need to tell people not to visit you while you are quarantined.

If you are a visitor to the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) or Canberra, you may be required to remain quarantined in a hotel or other suitable accommodation, as you will not be allowed to travel on public transport (including buses, trains, or domestic airlines) for 14 days.

Travelling to your home for quarantine

Wherever possible, if you need to travel to your home for quarantine (for example, traveling from the airport), you should use a personal mode of transport, such as a private car, to

minimise exposure to others. If this is not possible and you need to use public transport, rideshare or taxi, you must take the following precautions:

- Wear a surgical mask, if available;
- Avoid direct contact with other passengers, drivers and transport staff;
- 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; and
- Cough/sneeze into your elbow or directly into a tissue, throw the tissue in a bin, and wash your hands.

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 and there are other people living or staying with you. Early symptoms can include fever, cough, sore throat, chills, body aches or headache.

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 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 quarantined?

The people you live with and other close contacts do not need to be quarantined, unless they are also close contacts of a confirmed case or have returned from China, Iran or South Korea. The people you live with should also practise good hand hygiene.

Can I go outside?

If you live in a private house, it is safe for you to go into your garden or courtyard. If you live in an apartment or are staying in a hotel, it is also safe for you to visit the garden, but you should wear a surgical mask to minimise risk to others and move quickly through any common areas.

What happens if I develop symptoms while in isolation?

You need to monitor your health for the 14 days after leaving mainland China, Iran or South Korea, or for the 14 days after you were last exposed to a person diagnosed with COVID-19.

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

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 (02) 9962 4155 after hours. CDC will assess and advise on what to do next.
- If you cannot contact CDC, make an appointment to see a doctor. When you call the doctor's practice, tell the staff that you were exposed to an infectious person or that your recent travel history. 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. waiting in a different room or outside).
- Wear a surgical mask (if you have one) over your nose and mouth.
- When travelling to the doctor, do not use public transport, rideshare, or taxis, and do not attend any public places (such as shops or cafes/restaurants) on the way.
- **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 for groceries 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 quarantining 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 maintain my mental health during isolation?

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

- Read information about COVID-19 from reliable sources, such as the [ACT Health website](#).
- Talk to the other members of the family about the infection. Understanding COVID-19 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.
- Reassure young children using age-appropriate language.
- Consider each other's needs. Make sure everyone can have some time alone during the day.
- Accept that conflict and arguments may occur. Try to resolve them as soon as possible. For young children, distraction may help.
- 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 quarantine?

Being confined to your home can cause boredom, stress and conflict. Suggestions to reduce boredom 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.
- 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 (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

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