

COVID-19 – 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 disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus that is called 'COVID-19'. The outbreak originated in Hubei Province in China and has spread to a number of other countries outside China.

The key signs and symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, cough and shortness of breath. Other symptoms can include sore throat, chills, body aches, or headache.

Infection with COVID-19 can be confirmed by a laboratory test. A suspected case of COVID-19 is someone with symptoms who has been tested and is waiting for the results.

People who have a suspected or confirmed infection with COVID-19, if not requiring admission to hospital, must remain isolated at home until a public health officer or health worker tells them they can come out of isolation.

Who can be isolated at home?

Your treating team will provide advice on whether you are suitable for home isolation, taking into account your health, home situation, and if you have appropriate access to care.

Home isolation arrangements will be considered for people with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 and are 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;
- you (and anyone who lives in the same home as you) have access to the recommended personal protective equipment for infection control (e.g., gloves, facemask, cleaning agents, contaminated waste disposal); and
- you do not live with household members who may be at increased risk of complications from COVID-19 (e.g. people >65 years old, pregnant women, or people who are immunocompromised or who have chronic medical conditions).

Being isolated at home means that you must stay at home. You cannot leave home to go to work, school, or public areas (such as shops or cafes/restaurants), and should not use public transport, rideshare or taxis. **Visitors who do not have an essential need to be in the home should not visit while you are in isolation.**

Travelling to your isolation location

You must travel to your location for self-isolation using a personal mode of transport, such as a private car, to minimise exposure to others. You should not use public transport, rideshare or taxis. If you do not have any access to a personal mode of transport, please contact Communicable Disease Control (CDC), ACT Health by calling (02) 5124 9213 during business hours or (02) 9962 4155 after hours.

Do I need to wear a mask inside my home?

You should wear a surgical 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 be 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, fridge door handle, taps, benches and light switches) should be cleaned daily with household disinfectant or a diluted bleach solution (see the cleaning section below).

Can I go outside?

If you live in a private house, then it is safe for you to go outside into your garden or courtyard.

If you live in an apartment, it is also safe for you to go outside into the garden, as long as you wear a mask to minimise risk to others and move quickly through any common areas. It is safe to go onto your balcony if you have one.

Do carers or household members need to be isolated?

If you have a confirmed COVID-19 infection, the people you live with and other close contacts will also need to be isolated at home. They will be contacted by CDC and told how long they need to be isolated.

If you have a suspected COVID-19 infection 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 on a case-by-case basis.

If they do not require isolation but become unwell, they should contact 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 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 spread of the virus.

- Perform hand hygiene regularly.
- When washing your hands use liquid soap and water, and wash for at least 20 seconds. Dry hands on paper towel. Do not share hand towels.
- If your hands are not visibly soiled, you can 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.
- Liquid soap and water should be used if your hands are visibly dirty.
- Perform hand hygiene before handling food, before eating, before entering rooms and before touching other peoples' possessions.
- Wash your hands after using the toilet.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unclean 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 towels and bedding with other people in your home.
- Cutlery, dishes, utensils, and drinking glasses must not be shared and should be cleaned thoroughly with detergent and water, or in the dishwasher, after use.
- If the weather allows, make sure shared spaces in the home have good airflow by opening a window or using 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 (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 the doctor who cared for you and remind the staff that you have been isolated at home because you are a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19, so that they can 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 (such as shops or cafes/restaurants) on the way there or on the way home.
- **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 or COVID-19 diagnosis.**

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

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

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

Wear a disposable surgical face mask, plastic apron, and gloves when you touch or have contact with the person's used tissues, blood, body fluids and/or secretions (such as sweat, saliva, sputum, nasal mucous, vomit, urine or diarrhoea). Throw out disposable face masks, aprons, and gloves after using them and do not reuse them. Clean your hands immediately after removing your gloves, then again after removing apron and face mask.

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

Frequently touched surfaces

Use gloves and a face mask when cleaning. Clean all frequently touched surfaces regularly throughout the day. This includes kitchen benches, tabletops, fridge door handle, doorknobs,

bathroom fixtures, toilets, light switches, phones, remote controls, keyboards, tablets and bedside tables.

Clean using detergent and water, followed by a household disinfectant or diluted bleach solution, or use a combination detergent/disinfectant product. Always clean and dry surfaces before applying bleach or disinfectant.

Clean any surfaces that may have blood, body fluids and/or secretions or excretions on them using disposable kitchen towel as above, followed with a diluted bleach solution. A bleach-based disinfectant (1000 ppm) can be made by adding 1 tablespoon of bleach to 4 cups of cold water. Mix this disinfectant solution daily and dispose of what you do not use at the end of each day. If using bleach as disinfectant, apply to surface, leave for 10 minutes and then rinse with clean water.

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. Wash and dry with the warmest temperatures recommended on clothing labels. If possible, this should be above 65 degrees Celsius. Laundry sanitisers can also be used. Follow directions on labels of laundry products. If possible, tumble dry and iron using the highest setting compatible with the fabric.

Disposal of contaminated items

Place all used disposable gloves, gowns, face masks, and other contaminated items in a lined container with the plastic rubbish bag tied when full. Dispose of it with other general 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 maintain my mental health during isolation?

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

- Reading information about COVID-19 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 COVID-19 can reduce anxiety.
- Reassure young children using age-appropriate language.
- 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 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. This line operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- 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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