

COVID-19 – Information for close contacts

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, called 'COVID-19'. The outbreak started in a province of China and has spread to a number of countries outside China.

Close contact

A close contact is someone who has been face to face for at least 15 minutes or been in the same closed space for at least 2 hours, with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 when that person was infectious.

It is important that you understand the symptoms of COVID-19 and report any symptoms to Communicable Disease Control Section (CDC), ACT Health, on (02) 5124 9213 during business hours, or by paging (02) 9962 4155 after hours. We will call or SMS you once daily for 14 days after your last exposure to the infectious person to check on your health.

Self-isolation at home

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 close contacts of confirmed cases may be infectious before they develop obvious symptoms. For this reason, people who have been in close contact with any confirmed COVID-19 cases must be isolated in their home for 14 days following their last contact with the confirmed case, other than for seeking individual medical care. They cannot go to work, school, or public areas (such as shops or cafes/restaurants) and should not use public transport, rideshare or taxis. Visitors to the home should be discouraged.

Monitor your health closely

Monitor your health for 14 days after you were last exposed to the infectious person. Watch for these key signs and symptoms:

- fever

- cough
- shortness of breath
- sore throat

Other symptoms can include runny nose, chills, body aches, and headache.

If you develop symptoms

- If you are seriously unwell and it is an emergency, call 000 immediately.
- Keep yourself apart from other people as much as possible (e.g. in a different room).
- Wear a mask (if you have one) over your nose and mouth if other people are in the same room as you.
- Call the Communicable Disease Control Section (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 can't contact CDC, see a doctor as soon as possible.
- Phone the doctor before attending and tell them that you are a contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19. They can then plan for when you arrive to prevent spread of infection to others.
- 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.

How can we all help prevent the spread of the virus?

Practising good hand and general 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 and sneeze into your elbow or directly into a tissue and throw the tissue in a bin.

Where can I get more information?

<https://www.health.act.gov.au/public-health-alert/information-about-novel-coronavirus>

<https://www.health.act.gov.au/health-topics/novel-coronavirus>

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