What to do if you are a close contact

Please read this factsheet carefully. How we manage COVID-19 is changing constantly. Visit www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au for the most current information or call the Coronavirus Hotline on **1800 675 398** (24 hours, seven days a week). If you need an interpreter, press zero (0).

Contents

You or someone close to you has had contact with COVID-19.

To keep the community safe, you must stay at home in quarantine, usually for 14 days. If you can't stay at home, we can help organise somewhere else for you to stay. The Department of Health will tell you when you can stop being in quarantine.

Please read this factsheet carefully. How we respond to COVID-19 is changing constantly.

For more information, call the Coronavirus Hotline on **1800 675 398** (24 hours, seven days a week). If you need an interpreter, press zero (0).
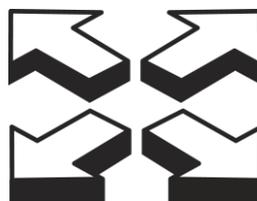
For any other calls, if you need an interpreter, call the translation service TIS National on **131 450** first.
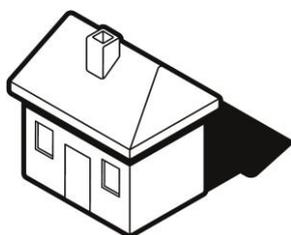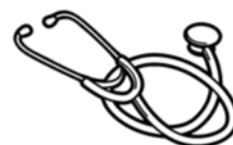
Stay at home	**Wash your hands and cover coughs and sneezes**	**Stay away from everyone as much as possible, including people you live with. Wear a fitted face mask where possible.**	**If you need medical help, call your doctor or the Coronavirus Hotline on 1800 675 398**

What does a close contact mean?

A close contact is someone who has been identified by Department of Health contact tracers as having spent time with someone who has COVID-19. There is a high chance that people who have been close to someone with COVID-19 may get the virus and spread it to other people. The best way to protect yourself, your family and the community is to stay at home and stay away from other people as much as possible.

How do we define close contacts?

We sort close contacts into two groups: primary close contacts and secondary close contacts.

Primary close contact

A **primary close contact** is someone who has had face-to-face contact or spent time in a closed space with someone who has COVID-19 while they were infectious.

The person may have been in an outbreak or other setting where there is a higher risk of spread of COVID-19.

This might happen through living in the same home, being at a workplace, Tier 1 public exposure site or indoors with someone who has COVID-19. The Department of Health will tell someone if they are a primary close contact.

The Victorian Chief Health Officer or Deputy Chief Health Officer may also identify someone as a primary close contact based on what is known about a particular case or outbreak.

Secondary close contact

A **secondary close contact** is usually someone who has had face-to-face contact with a primary close contact at least 24 hours after them being exposed to COVID-19. The Department of Health will tell someone if they are a secondary close contact and whether they must quarantine.

The Victorian Chief Health Officer or Deputy Chief Health Officer may also decide someone is a secondary close contact.

You must quarantine if you are a primary or secondary close contact

If you are a primary or secondary close contact, you must go directly to the place where you will spend your quarantine (stay at home) period. You must not make any stops along the way. For most people, this is usually your own home. If you cannot stay at home, we will organise accommodation for you.

You must not leave your home or accommodation for any reason other than:

- medical care
- to get tested for COVID-19
- an emergency, like a fire or family violence.

Because there is a high chance of spreading COVID-19 if you leave home for a reason that is not permitted, you may get a fine of up to $4,957.

The Coronavirus Hotline on **1800 675 398** (24 hours, seven days a week) can help you get food or medicine if you need it during quarantine.

Thank you for your help in keeping everyone safe by staying home and keeping 1.5-metre physical distance from those you live with.

Who do I need to tell?

Once you have been told that you are a close contact, you must tell:

- your employer; if you were at work in the 48 hours before your symptoms started, or before you were tested if you have not had symptoms. Your employer cannot identify you without your permission, but they may need to tell other workers someone in the workplace is a close contact of someone confirmed to have COVID-19.
- the people you live with; knowing this can help keep them safe too. They may also need to quarantine.

How to stay safe if you are a close contact

You must not leave your home or accommodation, except to seek medical care or in an emergency, like a fire or family violence.

Stay in separate accommodation to others, if you can. If you need it, we can help organise somewhere for you to stay that is separate from someone with COVID-19 – ring the Coronavirus Hotline **1800 675 398** (24 hours, seven days a week).

Remember the following if you must share accommodation with others:

- Stay in a separate room if possible and try to limit the amount of time you spend with others in your home.

- Keep a window open if possible, to help air flow from outside, and the door to the room closed.

- Use a separate bathroom if possible.

- If you must leave the room you are staying in, wear a fitted face mask and keep 1.5 metres apart from other people at all times. Only go into other areas of the home for a short time and only if you need to – this means you cannot watch TV or eat meals with other people in your home.

- If you do need to use a shared room within your home such as a kitchen or bathroom, clean and sanitise using a disinfectant all surfaces touched during this time. Don't forget the door, taps, light switches and cupboard handles, as well as bathroom surfaces such as the toilet seat.

- Have a set of household items (like plates, cups, glasses and cutlery) just for you to use during this time.

Whilst quarantining:

- Do not let people visit you inside your home or quarantine accommodation.

- If you live in a private house or apartment, you can go outside to your own garden, balcony or courtyard. You cannot go into a garden or courtyard area that you share with other households, such as a common garden or courtyard in an apartment building or other type of accommodation.

- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water or use hand sanitiser.

- Cover your coughs and sneezes using a tissue or your elbow.

- Wash laundry often, but only if you can do so in your home. You cannot go to a laundromat while you are in quarantine (staying at home).

- If you have some, wear disposable gloves while touching dirty items and always wash your hands after taking off gloves.

- Throw out used items like gloves and masks in a lined waste bin.

- Ask friends or family, who do not need to quarantine to get food or other necessities for you. If there is no one you can ask, call the Coronavirus Hotline on **1800 675 398** (24 hours, seven days a week) for help. Deliveries should be dropped off to your door/entry to your accommodation. The person dropping goods off should not enter your home or accommodation.

Check your symptoms

These are the symptoms of COVID-19 to look out for:

- cough
- sore throat
- shortness of breath

- runny nose
- loss or change in sense of smell or taste

- fever
- chills or sweats.

Do I need to get tested for COVID-19?

If you have any of the symptoms of COVID-19 during your quarantine period, you should get tested and then go directly home. You can leave your home to get tested. You should not make any stops along the way.

You must wear a fitted face mask if you leave home to get tested. Do not use public transport, taxis or rideshare services. If you need to get tested and do not have your own car and cannot walk or cycle, you can get tested at home by calling 1300 651 160.

Primary close contacts are usually tested both early and late in their quarantine period. You can leave your home or accommodation for this reason. It is important to get tested for COVID-19 on or after day 13 of your quarantine (stay at home) period. If you do not get tested on or after day 13, you will need to remain in quarantine for an additional 14 days.

Secondary close contacts should get tested for COVID-19 if you develop any symptoms. You can leave your home or accommodation for this reason.

After your test, you should stay at home until the Department of Health tells you that you can leave quarantine.

The COVID-19 test is free for everyone. This includes people without a Medicare card, such as:

- visitors from overseas
- migrant workers
- asylum seekers.

Your details are safe and will not be shared with anyone for tax or immigration purposes.

What if I don't have symptoms?

Even if they feel well, people who have had close contact with COVID-19 still need to quarantine and some also need to be tested.

Primary close contacts are usually tested early in quarantine and again towards the end. You must have a negative result on or after day 13 of quarantine to be able to leave quarantine after day 14. To keep the community safe, if you do not get a test on or after day 13, you must quarantine for an extra 14 days or until you receive a negative test result. You must do this test, even if you're feeling well.

Secondary close contacts should get tested if you have any symptoms of COVID-19 or if the Department of Health asks you to get tested. However, even if you don't have a test you must still quarantine (stay at home) until the Department of Health tells you that you can leave quarantine.

How long do I need to quarantine for?

Primary close contacts must quarantine (stay at home) for 14 days after their **last** contact with someone who has COVID-19 while that person was infectious. If you do become infected, this is most likely to happen within 14 days of your last contact with the person with COVID-19. If you cannot quarantine in separate accommodation to someone with COVID-19, your quarantine (stay at home) period will last longer.

You will need to get tested for COVID-19 early in quarantine and on or after day 13 of your quarantine (stay at home) period. If you get a negative result after you are tested on day 13, you will be allowed to leave quarantine after day 14. If you refuse to get tested on day 13, you must quarantine (stay at home) for an extra 14 days.

Even if you feel well or you get a negative test result on day 13, **you must still quarantine (stay at home) for the full 14 days and cannot finish your quarantine until you have been told it is safe to do so by the Department of Health.**

Secondary close contacts may need to quarantine (stay at home) for up to 14 days from the last time the primary close contact was exposed to someone with COIVD-19, even if you feel well. This is in case the primary close contact has already passed on the infection to you.

If you quarantine in the same household as a primary close contact, you will have to stay at home until the primary close contact has been cleared. You may be able to leave home earlier if you are able to quarantine in separate

accommodation. Assume your quarantine period will be at least 14 days and plan for this. The Department of Health will tell you when you can leave quarantine.

Look after your wellbeing during quarantine

Being in quarantine can be difficult, particularly for children. These steps can help you look after your wellbeing during this time.

- Remember at the end of quarantine you'll know that it is safe to spend time with other people.
- Focus on how you are helping to keep our community safe from COVID-19.
- Stay connected with family and friends via telephone, email or social media.
- Staying informed about COVID-19 can help reduce worries but be mindful of information overload.
- If you usually travel to work, speak with your employer about whether it is possible to work from home. A $1,500 support payment is available for eligible Victorian workers. See Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/pandemic-leave-disaster-payment>.
- If your child is in quarantine, support their learning from home. Access online resources that are easily available and speak to your child's school to get help.
- Stick to routines where possible – they're good for mental health. Try to go to sleep and wake up at the same time, eat at regular times, shower and change your clothes as you would normally. This will help you to manage your days and adjust when you finish quarantine.
- Try to keep up levels of physical activity that are safe for you and others, such as exercising indoors or in the backyard if you have one.
- Manage your stress levels, and if needed, increase your coping strategies (for example, listening to music, watching your favourite shows, practising meditation or exercising).
- If you have a health condition, keep taking any prescribed medication, continue with your treatment plan and look out for any new symptoms.
- Look at resources online – including advice on sleep, wellbeing and exercising at home. You can watch videos at Wellbeing Victoria <https://www.together.vic.gov.au/wellbeing-victoria>.
- Seek professional support early if you're having difficulties. If things feel a bit tough, or you need someone to talk to, contact your doctor to access mental health support or contact the counsellors on these free services:
  - Lifeline Australia <https://www.lifeline.org.au/>, phone 13 11 14
    Crisis support at any time.
  - Beyond Blue <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>, phone 1300 224 636
    Specialist support for people in isolation.
  - Kids Helpline <https://www.kidshelpline.com.au/>, phone 1800 551 800
    Free and confidential counselling for young people.

Information for caregivers and other household members

If you are looking after a friend or family member who is in quarantine, there are important things you should do to keep everyone in your home safe:

- Make sure the person in quarantine stays in one room, away from other people.
- Keep their door closed and windows open for ventilation where possible.
- Do not have visitors to the home.

- Keep the number of carers and people interacting with them to a minimum.
- Always wash your hands with soap and water or use a hand sanitiser before entering and after leaving their room.
- Keep the quarantined person's dishes and cutlery separate from the rest of the household.
- Wear a fitted face mask when you are in the quarantined person's room.
- Wear a mask and gloves when touching dirty laundry and wash only at the hottest setting.
- Clean and disinfect shared household surfaces (tabletops, doors, keyboards, taps and handles) after they have been touched by the person in quarantine and often during the day.
- Dispose of tissues and masks in a sealed plastic bag. Wear gloves when touching these items and always wash your hands after taking the gloves off.

If you cannot quarantine in a separate household from the person who has COVID-19 or is a primary close contact, your quarantine may be longer. This might be the case for parents with young children or carers who live in the same house. The Department of Health will tell you when you can leave quarantine.

Monitor their symptoms

If the person you are caring for develops serious symptoms such as difficulty breathing, call **Triple Zero (000)** and ask for an ambulance.

If anyone else has any symptoms they should get tested and stay home.

If the person you're caring for starts to feel unwell, call the Department of Health Public Health Division on **1300 651 160** for advice.

If you need to see a doctor, call before you go so that they can get ready for your appointment or arrange a telehealth (phone) appointment.

Support is available

There are a range of different financial supports you can access, depending on your personal situation. All links and information can be found on the Coronavirus website: https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/financial-and-other-support-coronavirus-covid-19

A one-off $1,500 payment is available to support eligible Victorian workers who:

- have COVID-19
- are a close contact of someone confirmed to have COVID-19.

Application: For information and to apply visit Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/pandemic-leave-disaster-payment

A $450 Test Isolation Payment is also available.
    Eligibility:
- If you have been tested for COVID-19 or are the guardian or carer of someone who has been tested;
- Are unable to work due to requirement to isolate after a test;
- Have used up your sick or carers leave entitlements;
- Are not receiving Australian Government income support such as JobKeeper;
- Provide evidence of your identity, your work rights and your employment;

- Follow the public health directions for your isolation.
- You can only claim for one test within a 30-day period unless you have been directed by the Department of Health to have more than one test in that period.

**Applications: online via the Victorian Government's Coronavirus
website: https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/450-coronavirus-covid-19-test-isolation-payment**

Help: If you need help applying, you can call the Coronavirus Hotline on 1800 675 398 and select option 4, then 4 again. If you need an interpreter, call TIS National on 131 450.

Food support

- Food relief packages are available. For more information, call the Coronavirus Hotline on 1800 675 398. If you need an interpreter, please press 0 when you call the hotline. Select 4, then 4 again for support.

You can get a free emergency relief package with food and personal items if you cannot get help from friends or family. For information visit Isolation and quarantine – extra help and support <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/quarantine-isolation-extra-help-and-support-coronavirus-covid-19> or call the Coronavirus Hotline on 1800 675 398 (24 hours, seven days a week).

Mental Health Support

The following links contain more information and may offer vital mental health support to you during this difficult time. Please do not hesitate to ask for help.

You can click on any of the links below for more support:

- Australian Government – Looking after your mental health during COVID-19
- Victorian Government – Mental health resources – COVID-19
- Beyond Blue – information advice and strategies:
  Contact their hotline on 1800 512 348 or visit https://coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au/
- Victorian Transcultural Mental Health: Mental health resources for multicultural communities

If you are in crisis or need urgent mental health support, call Lifeline on 13 11 14.