

# Coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

## Factsheet for people aged over 65 years

### What is coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which may cause illness in animals or humans.

The most recently discovered coronavirus (COVID-19) is a new virus that can cause an infection in people, including a severe respiratory illness.

### Who is at risk?

We are still learning about this new virus. Early indications are that people over 65 and people with pre-existing medical conditions such as heart and lung disease are more at risk of experiencing severe symptoms

### What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Many people will suffer only mild symptoms those most at risk may experience severe symptoms. The most common symptoms include:

- Fever
- Breathing difficulties such as breathlessness
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Fatigue or tiredness.

### How does COVID-19 spread?

COVID-19 spreads through close contact with an infected person; mostly face-to-face or within a household. It cannot jump across a room or be carried for long distances in the air.

- Close contact means greater than 15 minutes face-to-face or the sharing of a closed space for more than two hours with a confirmed case.
- A close contact could include any person meeting any of the following criteria:
  - living in the same household or household-like setting (for example, a boarding school or hostel)
  - direct contact with the body fluids or laboratory specimens of a confirmed case
  - a person who spent two hours or longer in the same room
  - face-to-face contact for more than 15 minutes with the case in any other setting not listed above.

### How do I reduce my risk of contracting COVID-19?

- Wash hands often with soap and running water, for at least 20 seconds. Dry with paper towel or hand dryer.
- Try not to touch your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don't have a tissue cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow.
- Isolate yourself at home if you feel sick. If you take medication ensure you have adequate supplies.
- Phone your GP first if you need medical attention. They will tell you what to do.

- Continue healthy habits: exercise, drink water, get plenty of sleep, and now is the time to quit smoking. Call the Quitline 137 848.
- Don't wear a face mask if you are well.
- Buy an alcohol-based hand sanitiser with over 60 per cent alcohol.
- Get the flu shot (available April). This won't protect you from COVID-19, but it will reduce your risk of getting the flu.

## Residential aged care services

The Australian Government has identified a number of high risk countries.

If people have travelled to any of the at risk countries in the last 14 days, they should not visit family and friends living aged care services. A current list of at risk countries available here:

[www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-covid-19-countries.htm](http://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-covid-19-countries.htm)

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