

NSW Health COVID-19 Self-Isolation Guideline

Self-isolation is one of the most important ways to stop the spread of COVID-19. The Guideline helps explain the current [Public Health \(COVID-19 Self-Isolation\) Order](#) and should be read in conjunction with the Order.

In addition, a range of [factsheets](#) providing tailored advice for specific groups of people are available and can be read together with this Guideline:

- [Confirmed cases](#)
- [Release and recovery from COVID-19](#)
- [Close contacts](#)
- [Frequently asked questions for parents and carers of people who need to be isolated due to COVID-19](#)

What is self-isolation?

Self-isolation means you must stay at your home or accommodation and remain separated from others, even if you are fully vaccinated or feel well. People with COVID-19 or who are close contacts must self-isolate to help stop the spread of COVID-19 to other people.

Self-isolation means you cannot:

- Go to work or school
- Go to any public places (e.g. shops, parks, beaches)
- Use public transport
- Have any visitors in your home, unless they are providing healthcare, emergency maintenance or emergency services

You are only allowed to leave your home or accommodation to get a COVID-19 test, for urgent medical care or in an emergency (including to avoid injury or escape the risk of harm from domestic violence).

If you need to leave for any of these reasons, you should travel by private vehicle, ride or walk. You must wear a face mask, stay 1.5m away from anyone else, travel directly to and from where you need to go and self-isolate in suitable accommodation as soon as possible.

If you need transport to leave your home or accommodation for any of these reasons, but do not have a private vehicle, call the NSW Health Isolation Support Line on 1800 943 553 for assistance. Further information for accessing testing and self-isolation is available [Travelling for testing and self-isolation](#).

Where can I self-isolate?

You should spend your self-isolation period at the place you are staying. This may be your home, a hotel, motel or other form of accommodation, and you must be able to safely stay there and separate from all other people.

If you are not already at home when you find out that you need to self-isolate, you must immediately get tested and travel by private car directly (without stopping) to your accommodation.

If you can't access a private car, or you are staying in temporary accommodation that ends before you will complete your self-isolation period, please call the NSW Health Isolation Support Line on 1800 943 553 for advice and assistance.

You may be told to self-isolate in a different accommodation such as a quarantine facility, hospital or other medical facility by a designated health practitioner or an authorised contact tracer (including an officer in the NSW Department of Education) at any time if they determine you cannot safely isolate at your home.

What do I need to?

Confirmed cases

Self-isolate

People with COVID-19 must self-isolate at home until medically cleared, even if fully vaccinated. You are not allowed to leave your home except for urgent medical care or in an emergency (including to avoid injury or escape risk of harm from domestic violence).

Tell your household, employer and place of education, and other people you have come into contact with that you have tested positive

Please take all reasonable steps to tell your household and other contacts, employer and place of education that you have tested positive for COVID-19.

Household

A household contact is someone who lives with you or someone who has spent more than 4 hours with you in a house, accommodation or care facility. Tell your household close contacts that you have tested positive for COVID-19. Ask them to get a COVID-19 test immediately, return home and follow the advice from NSW Health. All household contacts are close contacts and must follow the advice in the [close contact fact sheet](#) as they have been exposed to COVID-19.

Employer and/or education facility

Tell your work manager or education facility head/relevant staff member that you have tested positive for COVID-19. Tell them:

- the date of your test
- the date that you got sick (if you have symptoms)
- the days you were at work or at the education facility since 2 days before you got sick (or 2 days before your test if you have no symptoms).

You can tell your manager by phone or text. If you do not have their phone number you can email them, or you can ask a work friend to tell them for you.

If you have attended an educational facility, you can call the main phone number for the campus you attend. If you live in educational facility residence, also tell someone in the office of the residence.

Other people you have been in contact with

This includes friends and other people you have met socially where you spent 15 minutes or more in an indoor environment without a mask either:

- from 2 days before you got sick until the present
- if you had no symptoms, from 2 days before your test until the present.

This may include friends you had dinner with in a restaurant or family who visited your home.

Ask them to get a COVID-19 test immediately, return home and isolate until they receive a negative result. They will need to follow the advice in the [casual contact fact sheet](#).

You can tell them by phone or text. If you do not have their phone number, you can email them. NSW Health may also deem other people close contacts in settings where transmission has occurred or there is a high risk of transmission.

Close contacts

1. Self-isolate for 7 days

This means you must self-isolate for seven full 24-hour periods from the time you last had contact with the COVID-19 positive person.

For example, if you last had contact with the positive person at 10am Tuesday, you must self-isolate until 10am the following Tuesday.

If you are a household close contact who is unable to separate from the COVID-19 positive person, you must self-isolate with them until they are released from isolation.

2. Get a nose and throat (PCR) test at a [testing clinic](#) – immediately, and again on day 6

3. Leave self-isolation after 7 days

You can leave self-isolation after 7 days if your test on day 6 is negative, you feel well and you have had no further contact with a COVID-19 positive person

4. Limit activity for another week

For the next 7 days, please work from home if you can, avoid mixing with other people and do not go to high risk settings (health care, aged care, disability care and correctional facilities).

This is because it can take up to 14 days from the time you come into contact with someone with COVID until you develop symptoms yourself. Around a quarter of contacts who get infected will do so in the second 7 days of the 14 day incubation period, and can then pass COVID onto other people. After you are released from isolation, it's really important that you take care to avoid infecting other people in the next 7 days.

5. Get a nose and throat (PCR) test at a [testing clinic](#) again on day 12

If you are planning to travel, please check the entry requirements for your destination as they vary between states and countries.

What should the people I live with do?

If you are a close contact and live with a person who you cannot keep separated from (e.g. a child or carer where alternative arrangements cannot be made), they do not need to self-isolate with you, but they should not attend high-risk settings (health care, aged care, disability care, early childhood centres, primary school and correctional facilities) during your isolation period. If they work in one of these settings, their employer may do a risk assessment to allow them to return to work.

What if I have already had COVID-19?

If you have previously recovered from COVID-19 you will still be considered a close contact and you will need to self-isolate and test.

However, if you have been medically cleared before other positive cases in your household, you will not be considered their close contact and will not need to self-isolate or test unless you develop new COVID-19 symptoms.

How can I self-isolate safely within my home?

If you live with other people, you should keep completely separated from them during your self-isolation period. If you cannot keep completely separated from a household member for example, they provide essential care for you, refer to [Advice for parents and carers](#).

Physically distance

This means:

- Stay and sleep in a separate room
- Use a separate bathroom if available, or clean a shared bathroom after use
- Do not be in the same room as another person (even if they are also in isolation)
- Do not share household items including dishes, cups, towels and bedding. After using these items, wash them thoroughly with soap

Practice good hygiene

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser:
 - Before entering an area where other people may go
 - Before touching things used by other people
 - After using the bathroom
 - After coughing or sneezing
 - Before putting on, and after removing face masks
 - Before eating or drinking
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Regularly clean all surfaces you touch as much as possible (such as tabletops, doorknobs, and bathroom fixtures) by using household disinfectant or diluted bleach solution
- Wear a mask in shared areas or when caring for other members of your household

Take extra care to remain separate from any members of your household who are elderly, immunocompromised or have medical conditions such as heart, lung or kidney problems.

What if I get symptoms while in self-isolation?

If you are a contact, and get any COVID-19 symptoms during self-isolation, get tested at a [testing clinic](#) as soon as possible.

- Do not visit people, shops or anywhere else on the way to or from the testing centre
- Travel by private vehicle, ride or walk. Do not use public transport.
- Wear a face mask that covers your nose and mouth.
- Tell the testing clinic staff if you are a close contact of a person with COVID-19.
- If you cannot get to a testing clinic, call your GP for advice on testing. If your GP is unable to arrange COVID-19 home testing, call the NSW Health Isolation Support Line on 1800 943 553.

If you live with someone who works in healthcare, aged care, disability or correctional facilities, it is important that they speak to their employer before returning to work.

What if I live in an apartment building?

If you have to self-isolate and live in an apartment building, you will need to follow some extra steps to protect other building residents from COVID-19.

- You must remain inside your own unit. You should not use shared laundry facilities, or any other common areas, such as a gym, pool or shared outdoor area.
- Wash your clothes inside your own unit. Neighbours or friends should not do your laundry.
- Ask a neighbour or contact your building manager about collecting your rubbish. Leave the rubbish outside your door, return inside your unit, and close your door. The other person can collect the rubbish and should wear gloves and a surgical mask while doing this, and thoroughly wash their hands afterwards.
- If you are receiving deliveries including food to your home, please ask that it is left outside your door. Do not open the door to pick up the delivery until the corridor is empty.

When can I leave self-isolation?

- **If you are a case**, you can leave self-isolation when you are “medically cleared”. If you are self-managing you are able to leave self-isolation 10 days after your positive test, as long as you have had no symptoms for 72 hours – you will receive a SMS with this information. If you are under the care of a clinical team, your team will tell you when you will be released from isolation. Please see [Release and recovery](#) for more advice.
- **If you are a close contact**, you must remain in self-isolation until at least 7 days have passed since you had contact with the COVID-19 positive case, and you have received your negative result from your day 6 test. You do not need confirmation from NSW Health to end your self-isolation, however you need to be able to show evidence of your negative COVID-19 test results if asked by NSW Health or by Police.
- **If you are a household close contact** who is unable to separate from the COVID-19 positive person, you must self-isolate with them until they are released from isolation.

What support is available while I am in self-isolation?

Coping with self-isolation

Self-isolating can be difficult for you, your family and everyone living with you. Strategies to help you cope include:

- Keep up a daily routine as much as possible
- Keep in touch with family and friends via telephone, social media or email
- Exercise inside your home, on your private balcony or in your backyard using home exercise equipment, if available
- Take care of yourself and try to eat healthy foods

Welfare and clinical support

If you need other practical support or have non-urgent health related questions during isolation call 1800 943 553.

If you start to feel unwell and your symptoms get worse contact your Local Health District clinical team, your doctor, or call Healthdirect (1800 022 222) if you need health advice. Let them know you are currently self-isolating due to COVID-19.

In an emergency call Triple Zero (000) for example if you are having trouble breathing or have pain in your chest. Ambulance services are for emergencies and are provided free of charge to people who are confirmed or suspected to have COVID-19. Hospital care for COVID-19 is free.

Food and other essential supplies

Ask your family or friends who do not live with you to help by picking up groceries and medicines as needed, or you can order food online or by telephone. Ask them to leave the food on your doorstep and wait until they have left before opening the door with a mask on.

If you have no other way of obtaining food or other essentials call the NSW Health Isolation Support Line on 1800 943 553 and you will be directed to Service NSW for assistance.

Mental health and domestic violence support

For mental health support

- NSW Mental Health Line – 1800 011 511
- Beyond Blue helpline – 1800 512 348
- Lifeline – 13 11 14
- Or visit the Service NSW [Mental wellbeing resources](#)
- NSW Health has partnered with Sonder to provide a personal wellbeing service, available to help support you. The app provides access to 24/7 multilingual chat & phone access to a range of mental health, medical and wellbeing support services. You can [download the Sonder app](#) for free. You may also receive a text message from Sonder notifying you that you have free access to the app through NSW Health. Downloading the app is optional and Sonder do not retain or use your data for any other purpose than notifying you of this service.

For domestic violence support

- National sexual assault and domestic violence helpline – 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732)
- Kids Helpline – 1800 55 1800

What happens if I don't comply with self-isolation?

Not following these guidelines puts family, friends and the community at risk. Not following these rules is also a criminal offence and attracts heavy penalties. For individuals, the maximum penalty is \$11,000, 6 months in prison, or both with a further \$5,500 fine for each day you don't comply.

More information

- [National Coronavirus Health Information line](#) – 1800 020 080
- [NSW Health - COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\)](#)
- [NSW Health – COVID-19 fact sheets and guidelines](#)
- [Communicable Diseases Network Australia - National Guidelines for Public Health Units](#)