



COVID-19
INFO

Where can I get information?

For the latest advice, information and resources about coronavirus go to the Australian Government Department of Health website at www.health.tas.gov.au and follow the link from the homepage.

For general information about coronavirus, including the national response, call the National Coronavirus Information Line on **1800 020 080** (24 hours, 7 days). If you require translating or interpreting services, call **131 450**.

The Tasmanian Government Department of Health website (www.health.tas.gov.au/coronavirus) has information about how the situation is being monitored in Tasmania. You can also follow the Department of Health on Facebook for updates at www.facebook.com/healthtas

What we know about COVID-19

The current coronavirus situation is changing rapidly. We are still learning about how this new virus spreads and the disease it causes. We know:

- the virus causes respiratory disease that can spread from person to person
- most people experience mild flu-like symptoms, including fever, cough, sore throat and fatigue
- some people experience severe illness and, sadly, a small proportion die
- older people and people with underlying medical conditions seem to be more at risk of severe illness

- there is no treatment for coronavirus, but medical care can treat most of the symptoms. Antibiotics do not work on viruses
- vaccine is currently not available.

How does it spread?

The virus most likely spreads through:

- close contact with an infectious person
- contact with droplets from an infected person's cough or sneeze (if you are within a metre or very large step of an infected person)
- touching objects or surfaces (like doorknobs, sink taps and tables) that have cough or sneeze droplets from an infected person, and then touching your mouth, nose or eyes.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms range from mild illness to pneumonia. Some people recover easily, others may get very sick very quickly. Symptoms include fever, flu-like symptoms such as coughing, sore throat and fatigue, and shortness of breath. People with severe illness may have difficulty breathing, which is a sign of pneumonia and requires immediate medical attention.

It can take up to 14 days for symptoms to show after a person has been infected.

Who is most at risk?

Almost everyone in Australia with coronavirus has had recent international travel or contact with a person known to have the virus.

At the moment it seems the elderly, people with weakened immune systems, and people with underlying health conditions, like diabetes, lung disease, heart disease or kidney failure, may be at higher risk of severe illness.

How can I help prevent the spread of disease?

Personal hygiene is an important protection against COVID-19 and all respiratory illnesses. You can help slow the spread of illness by:

- washing your hands often with soap and warm, running water (or alcohol-based hand rub), especially after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose
- using a tissue (or flexed elbow if a tissue is not readily available) to cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze, then putting the tissue in the rubbish
- staying at home if you are sick, unless you are told to see a doctor
- keeping a large step from others if you can, when you are out in public
- wearing a facemask if you are unwell, to protect others
- knowing the signs of illness.

When should I wash my hands?

- before touching your face, especially your mouth, lips, nose, eyes

- before eating, drinking, preparing food/drinks
- after going to the toilet.

Do I need a facemask?

If you are well, you do not need to wear a facemask to protect yourself from coronavirus. Facemasks are generally for people who are suspected or known to have the virus and people directly caring for them.

There is no reason to wear a facemask for protection against COVID-19 unless you are in close contact (within a metre) with someone suspected or known to be infected. This is normally only healthcare workers and carers.

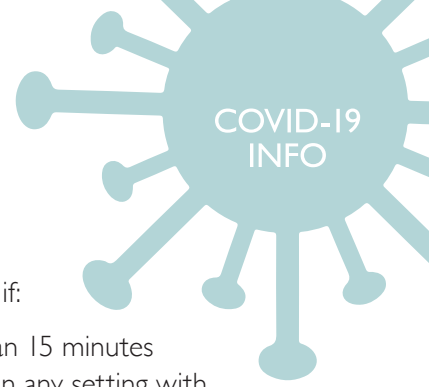
People who are sick with coronavirus should wear a facemask (if they can) when they need to leave home isolation, for example when they get tested or go to see a doctor.

What should I do if I think I have COVID-19?

If you think you might have COVID-19 because of recent travel or contact with a confirmed case, phone the Tasmanian Public Health Hotline on **1800 671 738**.

If you are feeling unwell, but haven't travelled or had contact with a confirmed case, phone your doctor or healthdirect Australia (**1800 022 222**) for advice. Protect others around you by washing your hands and keeping your distance. If seeing your GP, you **MUST** call ahead and mention your symptoms and any travel details.

If you have serious symptoms, such as difficulty breathing, call **Triple Zero (000)** and ask for an ambulance and tell the operator your recent travel history.



I'm sick but haven't travelled or had contact with a confirmed case

While coronavirus is causing a lot of concern, it is important to remember that most people in Australia who are unwell are suffering from the usual viruses in our community. At the moment, almost all cases in Australia have had recent international travel or had contact with a person known to have novel coronavirus. So, it is very unlikely that you have coronavirus.

See your GP if you feel you need to, or call Healthdirect on **1800 022 222**. If you suddenly get a lot worse and are worried, call **Triple Zero (000)** for an ambulance.

What is the difference between a close and casual contact?

Generally, a close contact is someone who:

- spends at least 15 minutes in face-to-face contact with someone who's had a positive test result; or
- spends more than 2 hours in an enclosed room with someone who's had a positive test result.

A casual contact is someone who has been in the same general area as someone who has tested positive to the virus while they were infectious, but is at lower risk of being infected.

Who are casual contacts?

A casual contact is someone who has been in the same general area as someone who has tested positive to the virus while that person was infectious.

You are a casual contact if:

- you have had less than 15 minutes face-to-face contact in any setting with a confirmed case in the 24 hours before the onset of their symptoms or while symptomatic; or
- you have shared a close space with a confirmed case for less than two hours in the 24 hours before the onset of their symptoms or while symptomatic.

What do casual contacts need to do?

As a casual contact, you do not need to stay home from work or school while you are well, unless you work with people who are vulnerable to severe illness from this virus.

You do not need to wear a facemask if you are well. Handwashing is more important for slowing the spread of illness.

You must closely monitor yourself for symptoms for 14 days (from when you had casual contact). Symptoms can include fever, cough, sore throat, fatigue and shortness of breath.

If you start feeling unwell with symptoms of coronavirus, within 14 days of your last contact with a confirmed case:

- isolate yourself (stay more than 1.5 metres or two large steps away from other people)
- call the Tasmanian Public Health Hotline **(1800 671 738)** and tell them you have had casual contact with someone known to have coronavirus.

You must remain isolated until Public Health Services tell you it is safe for you to return to your normal activities.

If you have severe symptoms, like difficulty breathing, call **Triple Zero (000)** and ask for an ambulance. Tell the ambulance officers that you have had casual contact with someone known to have coronavirus.

A fact sheet for casual contacts is also available from the **Department of Health website**.

Who needs to self-isolate?

To help limit the spread of coronavirus, you must isolate yourself in the following circumstances:

- If you have left, or transited through mainland China or Iran in the last 14 days, you must isolate yourself for 14 days from the date of leaving mainland China/Iran.
- If you have left, or transited through the Republic of Korea on or after 5 March 2020 you must isolate yourself for 14 days after the date of leaving the Republic of Korea.
- If you have left or transited through Italy on or after 11 March 2020 you must isolate yourself for 14 days after the date of leaving Italy.
- If you have been in close contact with a proven case of coronavirus, you must isolate yourself for 14 days from the date of last contact with the confirmed case.

Why do you have to isolate yourself for a whole 14 days?

If you have been told to isolate, it is because you might become unwell with coronavirus. It can take up to 14 days for people who have been infected with the virus to become sick, and it's possible to spread the virus to others 24 hours before you feel sick.

Isolating yourself is very important to prevent the spread of coronavirus in Tasmania. If you have been told to isolate at home, you must do so.

You should monitor your health during this time, and call the Public Health Hotline on **1800 671 738** if you begin to feel unwell.

What does 'isolate yourself' mean?

If you have been told you need to isolate, you must stay at home or in your accommodation and not attend public places, including work, school, childcare or public areas of university, higher education and vocational education campuses. Only people you usually live with should stay in the home or accommodation. Do not see visitors. Where possible, get others such as friends or family, who are not required to be isolated, to get food or other necessities.

If you must leave the home or residence, such as to seek medical care, you should wear a surgical mask if you have one. For more information, see the **'Home isolation and care resources'** on the Australian Government Department of Health website.

You must remain isolated either in your home or a healthcare setting until public health authorities inform you it is safe for you to return to your usual activities.

I'm in home isolation and need to get some groceries/ go to the chemist

It is very important that you don't leave your home while you're in home isolation. If possible, ask a neighbour, family member or friend to help you, or do an online order from your supermarket, with home delivery.

Transport while isolated

Wherever possible, if you need to travel to your location for isolation (for example, traveling from the airport), you are advised to use a personal mode of transport, such as a car, to minimise exposure to others. If you need to use public transport (e.g. taxis, ride-hail services, trains, buses and trams), follow the precautions outlined in the **public transport guide**.

Being isolated at home means that people need to stay at home. A person in isolation cannot leave to attend public places, including work, school, childcare or university. Only people who usually live in the household should be in the home. Do not see visitors.

I work with vulnerable people and have travelled to a country at higher risk, can I work?

You cannot go to work if you are returning from mainland China, Iran, South Korea or Italy. You need to self-quarantine at home for 14 days from your date of departure.

If you were in any other country, you can go to work but should monitor yourself for symptoms for 14 days after arriving back in Australia. If you start to feel unwell, immediately isolate yourself and call us back on this number straight away.

What should I do if I become unwell after leaving isolation or quarantine?

People who have been required to be in home isolation or quarantined and have completed their 14 day period without showing signs or symptoms of being unwell, are permitted to return to their daily activities including going to work, school, university, attending public places and using public transport.

While COVID-19 is of concern, it is important to remember that most people displaying symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat and tiredness are much more likely to be suffering from a cold or other respiratory illness – not COVID-19.

However, as a precaution, if you do develop these symptoms soon after leaving isolation, you are encouraged to see your usual doctor. Your doctor will be able to advise you on what steps you should take to get better and may test you for a number of respiratory infections including coronavirus, if medically necessary.

I live with someone who's in home isolation. Do I need to self-isolate too?

You don't need to stay in home isolation unless the person in home isolation who you live with gets sick and becomes a confirmed case. Then you will need to self-isolate for 14 days. If you don't get sick in that time, you'll be free to leave home isolation.

It's OK to go to work /school. As always, cover any coughs or sneezes and wash your hands often, especially after coughing, sneezing, blowing your nose.

I live with someone who's in home isolation and I'm at risk of severe illness (underlying health condition like heart disease / cancer, or elderly) how can I protect myself?

People can spread the virus to others up to 24 hours before they show signs of being sick, so it's important to protect yourself.

If you have an option of living elsewhere while the person is in home-isolation, that would be wise.

Otherwise:

- Try to keep your distance from the person in home isolation. Stay in separate rooms if you can and use separate bathrooms.
- If you need to share a bathroom, keep toothbrushes and face washers / towels separate.
- Don't share drinks or food.
- Wash your hands after touching crockery or cutlery used by the person in home isolation.
- Wash your hands often, especially before touching your face and preparing food/drinks or eating.

Where can I be tested for coronavirus?

Testing for novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is only available at a few places in Tasmania. Your doctor or the Public Health Hotline (**1800 671 738**) will tell you where you need to go. You'll need to book an appointment to have the test done.

The Department of Health fact sheet **I'm being tested. What do I need to know?** has more information about the process for testing for coronavirus.

Coronavirus respiratory clinics

Four respiratory clinics have been opened in Tasmania to help meet the demand for coronavirus testing. The clinics are located in Hobart, Launceston, Burnie and Latrobe.

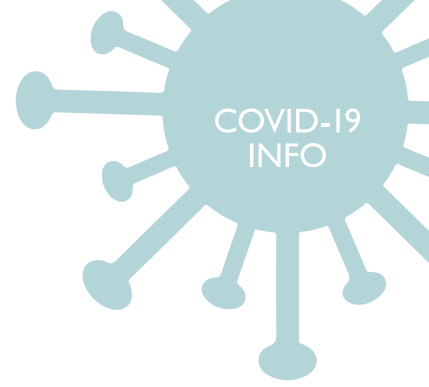
These clinics are not open for walk-up testing. Anyone who thinks they may need testing should first contact the Public Health Hotline on 1800 671 738. Your GP can also refer you to the clinic, as long as they have assessed you as a patient and determined that you require testing. If seeing your GP, you **MUST** call ahead and mention your symptoms and any travel details.

After being referred to the clinic, patients will be assessed and tested by a nurse and asked to return home to self-isolate until they have been told their test result. Results will usually be available within 24 hours.

Anyone who has been asked to self-isolate post-testing must ensure that they follow these very clear instructions.

I'm waiting for test results, when will I get them?

The Public Health Hotline response team or your GP will call you when your results are available. It usually takes 1-2 days.



I've had a negative test result but I'm getting worse

See your GP or call HealthDirect on **1800 022 222**. If you are severely unwell, call **Triple Zero (000)** for an ambulance.

I want to be tested even though I'm not sick

The national approach is only to test people who are unwell and have recently travelled overseas or been in contact with a person confirmed to have novel coronavirus. There is no value in testing people who are not sick.