

# Advice for people exposed to COVID-19



COVID-19 is still active in the community. There are simple steps you can take to protect yourself and others around you.

If you have been exposed to COVID-19, it is especially important you follow these steps to keep others safe.

If you are at [higher risk of severe illness](#), speak to your doctor now about what you should do if you become unwell. This includes if they recommend you have antiviral medicines.

## What should I do?

There are simple steps you can take to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 to others:

- **Monitor for symptoms.** If you have or develop cold or flu symptoms (runny nose, sore throat, cough, fever), stay home until your symptoms have gone
- **Maintain physical distancing** where possible and get together outdoors or in well-ventilated indoor areas
- Regularly **wash your hands**
- Consider doing a rapid antigen (RAT) test before visiting people at higher risk of severe illness.

## What should I do if I live with or spent a long time with someone who has COVID-19?

If you live with or have spent a long time with a person with COVID-19, you are at higher risk of getting infected (e.g., you spent the evening indoors with them, drove a long distance together or you looked after children who are now positive). **In addition to [the steps above](#)**, you should:

- **Avoid visiting high-risk settings** such as hospitals, aged or disability care facilities. Don't visit [people at higher risk of severe illness](#) for at least 7 days. If you have to visit, do a rapid antigen test (RAT) before you go and wear a mask
- **Talk to your employer** about when you should return to your workplace. This is particularly important if you work in a high risk setting such as health, disability or aged care. Consider working from home where possible

Speak to your doctor if you are at [higher risk of severe illness](#). Follow the advice for [people at higher risk of severe illness](#).

## How long am I at risk for?

After being exposed to someone with COVID-19 you are at risk of getting COVID-19 for up to 14 days. Most people who develop COVID-19 will get symptoms in the first 7 days, however some people will develop symptoms between 7 and 14 days. Some people with COVID-19 do not develop symptoms at all but may still infect others.

## Who is at higher risk of severe illness?

Some people are at higher risk of severe illness (more likely to get very sick, and may be at higher risk of needing hospital care), including:

- People aged 70 years and older
- People aged over 50 years with additional risk factors including obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, chronic lung disease (including moderate or severe asthma requiring inhaled steroids), neurological disease, severe chronic liver or kidney disease, active cancer or those who are not up to date with recommended vaccination
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 30 years and over with additional risk factors listed above
- People who are moderately to severely immunocompromised of any age
- People with significant or complex disability
- Pregnant women
- Children with complex chronic conditions

If you live in a remote area and have reduced access to healthcare or you are a resident in an aged care or disability care facility, discuss your risk with your doctor. You may also be eligible for antiviral medicines or additional care.

## I am at higher risk of severe illness, what should I do?

If you are at higher risk of severe illness and have been exposed to someone who has COVID-19:

- **Before you have symptoms:** Speak to your doctor about which test is right for you before you get sick. Ask if your doctor is able to perform a PCR test or if you need to be given a pathology referral form that you take to a private pathology provider location to get tested there. Ask your doctor if they recommend antiviral medicines or other treatments for COVID-19 if you test positive.
- **What if you already have symptoms?** Do a RAT as soon as possible and contact your doctor for testing advice. Your doctor may also recommend a COVID-19 PCR test. Early diagnosis means you can access antiviral medicines quickly. COVID-19 antiviral medicines work best if taken as soon as possible, and within 5 days from when your symptoms start. [Read more on antiviral medicines including how to access them if you are eligible.](#)

If you can't contact your doctor, use the [Service Finder](#) to find one near you, or call healthdirect on 1800 022 222 (open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week). Healthdirect is staffed by registered nurses who can provide expert health advice and connect you to care. If you need an interpreter, the nurse will arrange one for you.

[Find out more about protecting yourself from COVID-19 if you are higher risk of severe illness.](#)

## More information:

For more information about testing for COVID-19, visit [What COVID-19 test should I do?](#)

## Help in your language

If you need an interpreter, contact the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) National on 131 450. This service is free and confidential.