

COVID-19 symptoms and how it spreads

nsw.gov.au/covid-19/testing-managing/symptoms

Printed: 11 July 2021

Learn about the symptoms of COVID-19, when they appear and how it spreads.

Last updated: 03 October 2023

On this page

- [Symptoms of COVID-19](#)
- [How COVID-19 is spread](#)
- [More information and advice](#)
- [Contacts](#)
- [Related information](#)
- [Related apps](#)

Symptoms of COVID-19

Symptoms may include:

- fever (37.5 degrees Celsius or higher)
- cough
- sore throat
- shortness of breath (difficulty breathing)
- runny nose
- loss of taste
- loss of smell.

Other reported symptoms include:

- fatigue
- blocked nose (nasal congestion)
- muscle pain
- joint pain
- headache
- diarrhoea
- nausea/vomiting

- loss of appetite.

In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia with severe acute respiratory distress.

How COVID-19 is spread

COVID-19 is a human coronavirus that spreads from an infected person to other people in close contact:

- through contaminated droplets and aerosolised particles spread by coughing or sneezing
- by touching your mouth, nose and eyes with contaminated hands. Hands can become contaminated after contact with respiratory fluids, surfaces and objects containing the virus.

The amount of time between exposure to the virus and the first appearance of symptoms is usually 3 days, although it may range from 2 to 14 days.

If you don't have symptoms

If you have COVID-19 but do not have any symptoms, this is called "asymptomatic".

If you have COVID-19 and do not have symptoms, you can still infect other people and they could get sick.

By staying at home when you have COVID-19 symptoms, you can help stop the spread of respiratory infections in the community.




See **[What COVID-19 test should I do? \(https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/testing-managing/get-tested-for-covid-19\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/testing-managing/get-tested-for-covid-19)** for more COVID-19 testing information.

More information and advice

Follow the NSW Health advice for:

- **[testing positive to COVID-19 and managing COVID-19 safely at home \(https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/management/advice-for-confirmed\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/management/advice-for-confirmed)**
- **[getting tested for COVID-19 \(https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/stay-safe/testing/get-tested-for-covid-19\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/stay-safe/testing/get-tested-for-covid-19)**
- **[people exposed to COVID-19 \(https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/management/people-exposed-to-covid\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/management/people-exposed-to-covid)**

Contacts

- [Call healthdirect if you are worried about your symptoms on 1800 022 222 \(free and available 24 hours, 7 days a week\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/tel:1800022222)  → [_\(https://www.nsw.gov.au/tel:1800022222\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/tel:1800022222)
- [Call Service NSW 7am to 7pm, Monday to Friday and 9am to 5pm on weekends and public holidays](https://www.nsw.gov.au/tel:137788)  → [_\(https://www.nsw.gov.au/tel:137788\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/tel:137788)
- [Call Disability Gateway on 1800 643 787](https://www.nsw.gov.au/tel:1800643787)  → [_\(https://www.nsw.gov.au/tel:1800643787\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/tel:1800643787)

Related information

- [Testing and what to do if you have COVID-19](https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/testing-managing) → [_\(https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/testing-managing\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/testing-managing)
- [COVID-19 support for workers](https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/protecting-yourself/workers) → [_\(https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/protecting-yourself/workers\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/protecting-yourself/workers)
- [Rapid antigen tests for COVID-19](https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/testing-managing/rapid-antigen-tests-for-covid-19) → [_\(https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/testing-managing/rapid-antigen-tests-for-covid-19\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/testing-managing/rapid-antigen-tests-for-covid-19)
- [Advice for people exposed to COVID-19](https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/testing-managing/people-exposed-to-covid) → [_\(https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/testing-managing/people-exposed-to-covid\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/testing-managing/people-exposed-to-covid)

Related apps



Service NSW

Stay up to date with the latest NSW Government information. Access COVID-19 updates, digital licences, renew your rego and check fines and demerits.

- [iOS \(https://apps.apple.com/au/app/nsw-rego/id577283433\)](https://apps.apple.com/au/app/nsw-rego/id577283433)
- [Android \(https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=au.gov.nsw.service\)](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=au.gov.nsw.service)