

# Advice for people suspected to have COVID-19 (Coronavirus) infection

**If a doctor suspects you may have COVID-19 (Coronavirus) infection, follow the advice below until your doctor or the public health unit advises that you no longer need to be in isolation.**

Last updated: 13 March 2020

## Monitor symptoms

Whilst you wait for your results, if your illness gets worse, you should call the doctor who cared for you or the emergency department where you were assessed. If it is a medical emergency (e.g. shortness of breath at rest or difficulty breathing) you should call 000. Tell the ambulance staff you are suspected to have COVID-19.

## Stay at home

You should restrict your activities outside your home, except for seeking medical care. You should not go to work, school/childcare/university, the gym, or public areas, and should not use public transportation, taxis, or ride-shares, until cleared by your doctor.

## Separate yourself from other people in the home

If you are sharing the home with others, as much as possible, you should:

- remain separated from others
- wear a surgical mask when you are in the same room as another person
- use a separate bathroom, if available.
- avoid shared or communal areas and wear a surgical mask when moving through these areas.

Make sure that you do not share a room with people who are at risk of severe disease, such as elderly people and those who have heart, lung or kidney conditions, and diabetes.

People who do not have an essential need to be in the home should not visit while you are in isolation.

## Wear a surgical mask

You should wear a surgical mask when you are in the same room with other people (even if they are also in isolation) and when you visit a healthcare provider.

Make sure your surgical mask covers your nose and mouth at all times, and avoid touching your mask unnecessarily.

## Cover coughs and sneezes

You should cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or cough or sneeze into your sleeve/elbow. Used tissues should be placed in a bin, and hands immediately washed with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

## Wash your hands

You should wash your hands often and thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. You can use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser if your hands are not visibly dirty. Ensure you wash your hands or use a hand sanitiser:

- before entering an area where there are other people
- before touching things used by other people
- after using the bathroom
- after coughing or sneezing
- before putting on, and after removing, gloves and masks

## Avoid sharing household items

You should not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, bedding, or other items with other people in your home. After using these items, you should wash them thoroughly with soap and water or use a dishwasher/washing machine.

## Isolation requirements for people who have tested negative

If you have been tested for COVID-19 and the result was negative you must still remain in isolation if:

- you have been identified as a close contact of a person with confirmed COVID-19 while they were infectious;
  - you must isolate yourself for 14 days after your last contact with that person
- you have been in, or transited through, mainland China (excluding Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan), Iran or South Korea in the last 14 days;
  - you must isolate yourself for 14 days from the day you left China, Iran or South Korea.

If you develop additional symptoms or your current symptoms get worse please call your doctor, or the emergency department, where you were assessed.

If you were referred by the Health team at the airport for COVID-19 testing and tested negative for COVID-19, then you may continue your journey directly to your home/hotel using public transport, taxis or ride-sharing, or continue on onward flights. However, you must wear a surgical mask while travelling. Upon arriving at your home/hotel you must isolate yourself as outlined above.

You no longer need to remain in isolation if your COVID-19 test is negative and:

- you have not been identified as a close contact of a person with confirmed COVID-19 while they were infectious

- you have not been in, or transited through mainland China (excluding Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan), Iran or South Korea in the last 14 days.
- If you are unsure, contact your local public health unit on 1300 066 055.

## Prevention steps for caregivers and household members of suspected cases

There should only be people in the home who are essential for providing care for the person who is under isolation and those who cannot find alternative accommodation.

Caregivers and household members should follow the below advice to reduce their risk of infection.

### Wash your hands

Wash your hands often and thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. You can use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser if your hands are not visibly dirty. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. Always wash your hands before putting on and after taking off gloves and masks.

### Wear a surgical mask

Wear a surgical mask and disposable gloves when you are in the same room as the person with suspected infection, or when you touch or have contact with the person's blood, body fluids and/or secretions, such as sweat, saliva, sputum, nasal mucus, vomit, urine, or diarrhoea.

- Make sure your mask covers your nose and mouth at all times
- Throw out disposable surgical masks and disposable gloves after use
- Wash your hands immediately after removing the surgical mask and gloves.

### Clean household surfaces

Clean all "high-touch" surfaces, such as counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables, at least once a day wearing disposable gloves. Also, clean any surfaces that may have blood, body fluids and/or secretions or excretions on them.

- Read labels of cleaning products and follow recommendations on product labels. Labels contain instructions for safe and effective use of the cleaning product including precautions you should take when applying the product, such as wearing gloves or aprons and making sure the areas is well ventilated when using the product.
- Use a household disinfectant or a diluted bleach solution on hard surfaces. To make a bleach solution at home, add 1 tablespoon of bleach to 4 cups of water.
- Wear a surgical mask and disposable gloves while handling soiled items. Wash your hands immediately after removing gloves and masks.

- Wash laundry thoroughly
- Immediately remove and wash clothes or bedding that have blood, body fluids and/or secretions or excretions on them.
- Read and follow directions on labels of laundry or clothing items and detergent. In general, wash and dry with the warmest temperatures recommended on the clothing label.
- Dishes should be washed in a dishwasher where possible

## Disposing of contaminated items

Place all used disposable gloves, surgical masks, and other contaminated items in a lined waste bin before disposing of them with other household waste. Wash your hands immediately after handling these items.

## Tips for you and your family to help cope with home isolation

Being in home isolation can be frightening, particularly for young children. We've put together some tips for coping:

- Talk to the other members of the family about COVID-19 to reduce anxiety. You can find accurate, up to date information at the [NSW Health website](#).
- Reassure young children using age-appropriate language.
- Keep up a normal daily routine as much as possible.
- Arrange with your employer to work from home, if possible.
- Ask your child's school to supply assignments, work sheets and homework by post or email.
- Think about how you have coped with difficult situations in the past and reassure yourself that you will cope with this situation too. Remember that isolation won't last forever.
- Keep in touch with family members and friends via telephone, email or social media.
- Exercise regularly at home. Options could include exercise DVDs, dancing, floor exercises, yoga, walking around the backyard or using home exercise equipment, such as a stationary bicycle, if you have it. Exercise is a proven treatment for stress and depression.
- Ask your family, friends or other members of the household to pick up your groceries and medicines for you. If this is not possible, you may be able to order groceries and medicines (including prescription medicines) online or by telephone.
- Treat isolation as an opportunity to do some of those things you never usually have time for, such as board games, craft, drawing and reading.

## Still have questions or need support while in isolation?

Call National Coronavirus Health Information line 1800 020 080

For more information Visit the [NSW Health Website](#).