

COVID-19 Explained

The Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) has caused much uncertainty in Australia and internationally. At First2Care, we recognise the importance of sharing practical information on COVID-19, ways to reduce risk and how to manage if you contract the virus. For many, the virus is likely to only cause a mild illness with a relatively easy recovery. There are some people who may be more susceptible to the effects of COVID-19, and so taking precautions like washing hands and personal distancing, can be an effective way to minimise some of the risk.

How is COVID-19 transmitted?

COVID-19 is spread much like other viruses, through person-to-person contact when one of those persons is infected, by an infected person coughing, sneezing; by way of aerosol faecal particles; or by coming into contact with contaminated surfaces.

What are the symptoms?

- Fever
- Cough
- Fatigue
- Sore throat
- Shortness of breath

How you can help protect yourself:

There are some practical things you can do to help protect yourself and others from the risk of infection, such as:

- Washing your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitiser regularly throughout the day;
- Covering your nose and mouth with a tissue or flexed elbow when coughing or sneezing;
- Personal distancing (approximately 1m);
- Avoid contact with anyone who has symptoms such as a fever, cough, sore throat, fatigue, and shortness of breath;
- Avoid attending large public events or unnecessary visits to the shops; and
- Stay at home and limit contact with others.

It's very important to ask your support worker to follow the guidelines above to minimise any potential risks to you. If they indicate that they are at risk of having contracted COVID-19, reschedule with an alternate support worker, don't take any chances.

What can you do if you are unable to access basic supplies or medication that you need?

Stockpiling some food and medications in the event that you need to self-isolate or that a lockdown is imposed in your region, is now a reasonable course of action. The government has also just announced the availability of prescription drugs being able to be ordered over the phone and delivered to your doorstep. Likewise, GPs are now being funded under a COVID-19 assistance package to provide over the phone bulk billed consultations.

If you are unable to go to the shops for supplies and suspect you may need to be quarantined you can:

- Contact the Red Cross who may be able to assist in organising food or medication. Call the Red Cross Hotline on 1800 733 111 for more information.
- If you get support services, you can contact your support organisation directly to discuss your situation. Your support organisation may be able to give you points of contact in your area.
- You can also speak with your family, friends and neighbours about how you may be able to offer support to each other.

What to do if you think you have COVID-19, or if you have been in contact with someone who has it?

- If you develop symptoms as described above, you should seek immediate medical attention. Call ahead to your GP or emergency department and mention if you know you've been in contact with someone with the novel coronavirus infection. The government has just announced the setting up of 100 COVID-19 screening clinics across the country so that you can avoid attending your GPs clinic;
- If you have symptoms of COVID-19 and have travelled overseas in the past 14 days, you need to attend a screening clinic immediately;
- In the event your test results come back positive for COVID-19 you will either be required to self-isolate at home or in a healthcare setting until public health authorities inform you it is safe for you to return to your usual activities; and
- Those who are self-quarantined at home can call 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) for further advice and to register for support. Staff at 13 HEALTH will connect people through to a local Public Health Unit and other health support services when appropriate.

What to do if you are experiencing financial hardship as a result of being self-quarantined?

Those experiencing personal financial hardship as a result of being in self-quarantine you are encouraged to contact the Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors by emailing CRshecclo@communities.qld.gov.au

What to do if you are experiencing stress and anxiety or are feeling isolated?

- It is normal to feel stressed or confused during an unusual situation. Talking to people you trust can help, including family, friends, support workers.
- People in self-quarantine can also call the Red Cross hotline on 1800 733 111 to receive over-the-phone psychosocial support and non-contact practical assistance.
- Listen to credible news sources for COVID-19 updates and limit your reliance on unverified news sources on social media.

- Think about ways you have managed when you have felt similar feelings and draw upon those skills to help you manage your emotions during this health challenge.

Can you still go out and do things such as attend your Local Support Group?

To put it simply, if you're unwell then you should not attend public events. However, if you are in good health, presently there is no need to confine yourself or cancel events. However, be mindful about the precautions you can now be taking and practice these for when the risk is heightened in the coming weeks and months ahead. For example: No hand shaking; regular hand washing; try not to touch your face; practice personal distancing; to minimise the risk of infection. Your health is important and those with disabilities and the aged have a heightened risk compared to others.

What to do if your support worker becomes unwell

If your support worker thinks they may have been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19, they should arrange alternate people to support you. If you have any concerns, you can contact your support organisation directly to discuss those concerns and request further information.

NDIS Participant Information

NDIS participants, families and carers can request alternatives to face-to-face meetings. For more information, please visit the [NDIS website](#).

Remember, the best thing is to keep up to date information, wash your hands regularly, stay 1.5 metres away from people coughing or sneezing, and stay home if you're sick.

Call the National Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

If you require translating or interpreting services, call 131 450.



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