



COVID-19

Guidance for household contacts

16 March 2022

This fact sheet provides information for people who **live with** someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 (a case). As a **'household contact'** it is important you have information about what this means. This information is regularly reviewed and is subject to change, sometimes at short notice.

If someone in your household tests positive for COVID-19, you must start your self-isolation on the day that they receive their positive test result. When they get to day 3 and day 7 of their isolation, YOU need to get tested using a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT). You stay in isolation until the case has completed their 7 days of isolation. Your isolation **does not** restart if additional members of your household are identified as cases during the first case's isolation period.

It is important that you isolate away from other people, including the case in your household, as much as possible, even if you have negative test results. Do not attend work, school or public places during this time. Do not use public transport.

Remember, when the first case in your household reaches day 3 **and** then day 7 of their isolation period, you must get a test. Find testing services [in your region here](#).

You can go back to normal life on day 8 provided you have a negative test result from your day 7 test so long as you have no new or worsening symptoms.

Please note: After the initial isolation period ends, there is a 10-day window during which no Household Contacts of the original case can be re-classified as Household Contacts. You only need to begin isolation again during these 10 days if you test positive yourself.

Once 10 days has passed from the end of the original isolation period, the usual rules apply.

After 10 days, if a new household member (not the original case) tests positive, they, and all other Household Contacts (who have not yet become cases themselves), must isolate for 7 days. A recovered case is the exception to this. They are exempt from becoming a Household Contact for 90 days after their isolation ends.

Isolation at home

Isolation is an effective measure to protect those around you – your family, friends, colleagues, and others – from potentially contracting COVID-19. It means taking simple steps to avoid close physical contact with other people as much as possible, like you would if you had the 'flu. It's important to do this even if you do not have symptoms as you can be infectious before knowing you've contracted COVID-19.

It is important to look after yourself, including your mental health, and if you feel that you are not coping it is important to talk with someone you trust or call 'Need to Talk' on 1737. We know it can be a stressful time, but taking these measures will help protect you, your family and all of New Zealand from COVID-19.

Talk to your friends and family and ask for their help to access the things you will need during this time. Talk to your employer to make arrangements to work from home if possible or discuss what leave you might be able to access.

If you develop symptoms

Many people who have had close contact with someone confirmed as having COVID-19 do not become ill, but it is important to take note of any relevant symptoms.

Common symptoms of COVID-19 are like those found with illnesses such as a cold or the 'flu. You may have one or more of the following:

- new or worsening cough
- sneezing and runny nose
- high temperature
- temporary loss of smell or altered sense of taste
- sore throat
- shortness of breath

Less common COVID-19 symptoms may include diarrhoea, headache, muscle aches, nausea, vomiting, malaise, chest pain, abdominal pain or confusion/irritability

Shortness of breath, or trouble breathing, is a sign of possible pneumonia so you should call 111 and tell them that you live with someone who has COVID-19.

If you are at home and develop any of these symptoms, you should take a further RAT. You and all members of your household should not leave home until you have taken this test and tested negative.

If your symptoms worsen and you need to seek medical care, call Healthline (for free) on 0800 358 5453, your doctor or an after-hours clinic for advice. Before seeking care, **always** call ahead and tell the health care professional that you live with someone who is positive for COVID-19. This will help them take steps to keep you and other people safe. Clean your hands with hand sanitiser and put on a face mask before you enter any healthcare facility.

Advice about self-isolating at home

Self-isolating and keeping away from other people can present its challenges, but there are things you can do to make your time in isolation easier.

What to do:

- Do keep in touch with friends and family over the phone or internet, but don't have physical contact with anyone who isn't isolating with you.
- Do ask friends or family to drop off anything you need or order supplies online, where possible. Make sure any deliveries are left outside your home for you to collect. Many New Zealand companies are now offering a 'contactless' delivery option, where they notify you when they have delivered your order but remain nearby to ensure you receive it.
- Wash your own dishes thoroughly with detergent and water or place them in a dishwasher for cleaning.
- Physical exercise is good for your wellbeing. Look for online classes or courses to help you exercise in your home. You can leave home to do outdoor exercise in your neighbourhood (but not at a shared exercise facility, such as a swimming pool or gym) and you must still stay at least 1.5 metres distance from other people.
- You can continue to live with others in your household during this time, but you need to avoid close contact with them by limiting any situations where you have face-to-face contact closer than 2 metres.

- Clean your hands and cough or sneeze into your shoulder or elbow.

What not to do:

- Don't have any visitors in your home. This includes tradespeople unless it is an emergency.
- Don't share dishes, drinking glasses, cups or eating utensils (including cups and glasses in the bathroom and bedroom) with others in your household.
- Don't share food and drinks or prepare food for others.
- Don't share personal items such as beds, linen, towels and washcloths.
- Don't use public transport, taxis or similar transport methods during your isolation period.

Leaving your place of self-isolation

Provided you wear a face covering at all times (except when exercising) you are permitted to leave home for the following reasons:

- for medical examination and testing that you require as a close contact; or
- to access an essential health service for treatment that cannot be deferred until after your self-isolation; or
- to attend any court, tribunal, New Zealand Parole Board hearing, or other judicial institution that you are required to attend; or
- if you need to leave to move to another place to protect your own or another person's life, health, or safety; or
- to visit a dying relative who is not expected to live beyond your isolation period; or
- to visit the body of a relative before a funeral or tangihanga, if you will not be able to visit the body after your period of self-isolation.

Critical workers who are household contacts

If you are a household contact and you work for a [critical service](#) and you are vaccinated and asymptomatic, you may be able to continue to work through the [Close Contact Exemption Scheme](#).

If you work alone (including travel to and from work) and are a household contact, are not in a customer or public facing role, you can continue to work in a [Bubble-of-One](#).

Personal care

Wash your hands often and thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, making sure you dry them thoroughly. Do not share your towel with anyone else in the household. You can also use hand sanitiser (containing at least 60 percent alcohol) if soap and water are not available and if your hands are not visibly dirty. If using hand sanitiser, cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands. The same hand hygiene should apply to all household members.

For more detailed instructions see the [Cleaning your hands learning module](#).

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue, your sleeve or elbow when you cough or sneeze. Throw used tissues in a rubbish bin and immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, making sure you dry them thoroughly, or use hand sanitiser.

Keep your home or accommodation clean and ventilated

If you are isolating at home, you should not share a bed or a room with others during your isolation period. Minimise the time you spend in shared spaces such as bathrooms, kitchens and sitting rooms as much as possible and keep shared spaces well ventilated. Clean surfaces like kitchen benches and sink tops after you use them and try to avoid touching them after you have cleaned them.

If you share a kitchen with others, avoid using it while others are present. Take your meals back to your room to eat. It may be easier for someone else in your household to prepare your food so you can avoid the kitchen area. If you have one, use a dishwasher to clean and dry your used crockery and cutlery. If this is not possible, wash them using your usual washing up liquid and warm water and dry them thoroughly, remembering to use a separate tea towel.

If you use a shared toilet and bathroom, it's important that you clean them every time you use them (for example, wiping surfaces you have come into contact with). You may wish to be the last to use the shower/bath in the morning or evening to make this easier on those you live with.

Laundry

Do not shake dirty laundry as this can disperse the virus through the air. Wash items according to the manufacturer's instructions on the clothing tag. It's ok to wash your dirty laundry with the rest of your household if you do the washing yourself, but you should only fold and put away your own items. It may be easier for someone else to fold and put away clean shared laundry items (such as towels and tea towels) and provide a supply for you.

It may be easier for someone else to fold and put away clean shared laundry items (such as towels and tea towels) and provide a supply for you. If you do not have a washing machine, wait until 72 hours after you have been released from isolation before taking your laundry to a laundrette. You may need friends or family members to drop off basic clothing items to you.

Living with children

You should try to reduce your contact with your children if they don't need to self-isolate with you, but that may not be possible, particularly with young children. If you are unable to isolate from your children, then your children must isolate with you.

Try to explain what is happening in a way that is easy to understand. Tell them you are staying at home to protect other people. Try to avoid worrying them. Remind them that you are being very safe to protect them and other New Zealanders.

If your child develops symptoms, you should contact Healthline.

More information and support

For the latest health advice, information and resources, visit the Ministry of Health's COVID-19 webpage health.govt.nz/covid-19 or the Unite Against COVID-19 webpage covid19.govt.nz/about-this-site/contact-and-support/

You can also call Healthline on 0800 358 5453, it is free and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Healthline has interpreters available if you would prefer to talk to someone in a different language.

It is important to look after yourself, including your mental health, and if you feel that you are not coping it is important to talk with a health professional. For support with grief, anxiety, distress or mental wellbeing, you can call or text 1737 – free, anytime, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week – to talk with a trained counsellor.

Learning modules

You can find useful advice on how to stop the spread of COVID-19 on the Ministry of Health's [LearnOnline](#) website.