



# COVID-19 clinics

## Frequently asked questions

### What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Symptoms include shortness of breath or cough, with or without a fever. In some cases, the virus can cause severe pneumonia. From what we know now about COVID-19, the symptoms can start between 2 and 14 days from exposure to the virus.

### Should I be tested if I don't have symptoms (if I am "asymptomatic")?

Testing asymptomatic patients (people without symptoms) is only permitted under certain circumstances:

- Before proceeding with organ donation or organ transplantation
- For people receiving medical treatment from Indian Ocean Territories
- Targeted government approved screening programs
- Returned travellers prior to release from mandatory quarantine.

Asymptomatic testing should not be carried out for work purposes or "fit for work purposes", unless requested or approved by Public Health.

### Why won't I get tested if I don't have symptoms?

Unless you fall in to one of the approved categories that permits testing of people without symptoms, you cannot be tested. The reason for this is, in the early stages of infection (before people have symptoms), it may not be possible to detect the virus. Testing when you do not have symptoms could give a false negative result.

### Who can be tested?

Any person will be considered for testing if they meet any of the following criteria:

- presenting with a fever ( $\geq 37.5^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) OR
- a recent history of a fever (e.g. night sweats, chills) without a known source OR
- an acute respiratory infection e.g. shortness of breath, cough, sore throat.

People may also be considered for testing if they have acute loss of smell or taste **and** meet one of the following criteria:

- close contact of a confirmed or probable case
- healthcare, aged, or residential care workers with direct patient contact
- persons who have returned from overseas or have lived/ travelled through an area in Australia with elevated risk of community transmission
- patients where there is no alternative cause of symptoms

## **I have just had my COVID-19 test. What should I do now?**

**If you are awaiting a test result for COVID-19, you must self-quarantine/self-isolate.**

People who have been tested for COVID-19 must self-quarantine/self-isolate until their test results are available. After your test you must immediately return to your home (or other suitable accommodation) and self-quarantine until you get your results.

### **What does self-quarantine or self-isolation mean?**

Self-quarantine or self-isolation means you **must stay in your home, hotel room, or other accommodation** even if you are perfectly well with no symptoms. If you live in a unit or apartment block you must stay in your unit or apartment. **You cannot attend public places such as work, school, shopping centres or go on a holiday.** Only people who usually live with you should be in the home. Do not see visitors.

You must stay in your place of isolation and **NOT GO OUT.** You are only permitted to leave your home for a medical emergency or if there is a risk to your immediate safety. If you become unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 such as a cough, sore throat or fever whilst in self-quarantine you must contact 1300 316 555 (8am-5pm, 7days a week) for advice as soon as possible to report that you are unwell.

If you require urgent medical assistance call 000 and let them know that you are in self-quarantine due to COVID-19.

Other people who live in your home do not need to self-quarantine and can go about their usual activities provided the above precautions are followed. However, if you develop symptoms and become a confirmed COVID-19 case your family may need to self-quarantine. Your Public Health Unit will advise you.

For more information please see [Self-quarantine in Western Australia to prevent the spread of COVID-19 – Information for returned travellers, close contacts and those tested for COVID-19](#)

### **When will I be notified of my test results?**

It will take between 2 and 3 days to be notified of your test results.

### **What should I do if I feel worse while I am waiting for my test results?**

If you require urgent medical assistance (e.g. you are having trouble breathing) call 000 and let them know you are in self-quarantine due to COVID-19. You are only permitted to leave your home for urgent medical treatment at a hospital or if there is a risk to your immediate safety.

If you become unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 such as a cough, sore throat or fever whilst in self-quarantine you must contact 1300 316 555 (8am-5pm, 7days a week) to report that you are unwell as soon as possible for advice. Let them know why you are in self-quarantine. You are not permitted to leave your home until you have contacted this number and have been directed by a responsible officer to do so. If you are directed to attend a COVID-19 clinic for testing, you do not need to phone ahead.

You should go directly to the testing location by private car from your place of residence. Wear a mask if you have one available, if not wear a face covering, maintain 1.5 metres from others, and practise good hand hygiene and cough etiquette. Return home immediately following testing and self-isolate.

## **What happens if I get a positive test result for COVID-19?**

A Public Health Unit staff member will discuss your positive result with you.

If you are a confirmed case of COVID-19 you must self-isolate until you recover and are cleared by the Department of Health to resume your normal activities (you will receive a formal letter of clearance from the disease).

If you are well enough you can carry out your self-isolation in your home or other suitable accommodation. For more information see the [fact sheet for confirmed cases](#).

## **What happens if I get a negative test result for COVID-19?**

If you provided an Australian mobile phone number at the COVID clinic where you were tested, your negative test result will be provided to you by text message (SMS). If you are the parent/guardian/carer of a child under the age of 16 who is tested at a COVID clinic you will receive their negative test result by text message (SMS) if you provided an Australian mobile phone number at the COVID clinic.

## **If my test is negative do I need to remain in self-isolation?**

If your test results are negative and symptoms have resolved, you can return to normal activities UNLESS you were already in self-isolation because you are a close contact or returned traveller. In these cases, you will still need to complete your original 14 days of self-isolation.

If your results are negative but you are still unwell, you should remain at home or in other suitable accommodation until your symptoms have resolved. All respiratory infections are contagious, and it is important people do not attend work or school until they have recovered from their acute illness. This is particularly important for people who work with high-risk groups such as health care workers, aged care/residential care workers, disability support officers or police officers.

## **Can COVID-19 be transmitted from person to person?**

Yes, COVID-19 can be spread from person-to-person. This can happen when a person encounters the respiratory secretions of an infected person, for example through coughing or sneezing.

Spread of this coronavirus from person-to-person is usually between close contacts. Close contacts have been defined as those people who have been face-to-face with a person infected with the virus for at least 15 minutes (cumulative over the course of a week while the person was infectious) or been in the same closed space for at least 2 hours with an infected person.

Spread of this coronavirus can also occur through touching objects or surfaces (such as door handles or tables) contaminated from a cough or sneeze from a person with a confirmed infection, and then touching your mouth or face.

## **What is the treatment for COVID-19?**

There is no specific treatment for COVID-19 and, in most cases, symptoms will resolve on their own.

## **Is there a vaccine?**

There are currently no available vaccines for COVID-19.

## How can I protect myself and my family?

The best way to protect yourself and others is to practise good hygiene by:

- frequently washing your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, or using an alcohol-based hand gel
- covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue or flexed elbow
- avoiding close contact with anyone who has a cold or flu-like symptoms.

## I am caring for someone who has (or could have) COVID-19, how can I protect myself?

Anyone in the home with a respiratory illness should be cared for in a single room, where practicable. Isolating sick people in single rooms reduces the risk of transmission to others.

Read the information below on how to 'protect yourself and others from COVID-19' to reduce the chances of spreading infections at home.

If it is not possible to keep the potentially infected person in a room by themselves, try to follow these principles to reduce chances of disease spread:

- as a priority, place people with excessive cough and phlegm in single rooms
- if there is more than one person with the same symptoms, they can be placed together in the same room
- importantly, ensure that people sharing a room are physically separated (more than 1.5 metres) from each other.

## Should I wear a face mask?

Surgical masks are helpful in preventing people who have COVID-19 from spreading it to others. If you are well, you do not need to wear a surgical mask.

If you are required to self-isolate, you should use a surgical mask (if you have one) in the following circumstances:

- if you need to leave your home for any reason (e.g. to visit a medical facility)
- if you have symptoms and you cannot avoid being in the same room as other people

## Where can I find more information?

Further information about COVID-19 and self-isolation is available on the Department of Health's websites: [www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/coronavirus](http://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/coronavirus)

If you need help with translating the information on these sites, contact the Translating and Interpreting Service (external site) or phone 131 450.

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**This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with disability.**

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