



# Coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

## What is it?

A new type of coronavirus was detected in late 2019. This virus can cause a severe respiratory illness called coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

The most common symptoms include fever and respiratory symptoms such as cough, shortness of breath and a sore throat. For many people, COVID-19 only causes mild symptoms. Some people such as children and young adults often have no symptoms. But some people are more at risk of having severe symptoms. This includes the elderly and people with pre-existing medical conditions.

## How is it spread?

The virus spreads through close contact with a person while they are infectious. People start becoming infectious 24 hours before showing symptoms and remain infectious until the symptoms stop. Close contact is defined as:

- More than 15 minutes face-to-face contact or
- Spending two hours or more in the same room
- Living in the same household or household-like setting
- Direct contact with body fluids or laboratory specimens of a confirmed case
- Sitting within two rows of a confirmed case on an aeroplane

## What will my GP do now?

Your GP will decide if you need testing. There are strict criteria for testing COVID-19. As of 24 March 2020, NSW Health recommends testing any person living in south western Sydney who has:

- A current or recent fever (temperature of 38° Celsius or higher), or
- An acute respiratory infection (cough, shortness of breath, sore throat)

If you test positive for COVID-19, you will be notified by either your GP or a local health district clinician.

## What will happen if I test positive?

Your care may be provided by your GP or someone from the local health district. They will be in regular contact with you to monitor your symptoms. This may be done using telehealth (talking over the internet or phone instead of face-to-face).

Most people can be managed at home and will need to **self-isolate** to prevent spreading the infection to others. If you have severe symptoms, you may need to be managed in hospital.

You will be told when you no longer need to self-isolate. This is typically for 14 days. By this time your symptoms should be gone. If you have a severe infection, you may need to stay in isolation for longer.

Your local Public Health Unit will organise contact tracing.

## How do we slow the virus?

**Self-isolation for people testing positive**  
*This means not having contact with others until your symptoms have gone.*

**Contact tracing**  
*Finding out how someone became infected and testing close contacts to prevent the virus spreading further*

**Protecting ourselves**  
*Using social distancing and infection control to reduce our risk of getting the virus*

## When should I call an ambulance?



Phone Triple 0 (000) if your symptoms become serious (e.g. shortness of breath at rest or difficulty breathing)

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## What can I do?

If you have a fever or symptoms of an acute respiratory infection (cough, shortness of breath, sore throat), call your GP to see if you need testing. **Do not attend the GP practice without calling first.** Your GP may see you using telehealth to reduce the risk of infecting others.

If you test positive, it is important you follow your GP's advice. It is important to **self-isolate** to stop the spread of COVID-19 to other people. If you must go out to a medical appointment, follow precautions to reduce the risk of infecting others.

It is important to receive your flu vaccination whether you have tested positive to COVID-19 or not. Reducing your risk of getting influenza helps both your overall health and our health system.

We all have a part to play to slow the spread of COVID-19. Use appropriate **infection control** methods. Practise **social distancing** and only go out when it is necessary, such as going to work, buying groceries, etc.

## What questions could I ask my doctor?

- Should I get tested?*
- Where can I get tested?*
- What does self-isolating mean?*
- What about the people I live with?*
- Who can I talk to if I need support?*
- What can I do to prevent being infected?*
- Should I get the flu vaccine?*
- Why is social distancing important?*



## What supports are available?

There are public testing clinics available at Bankstown, Bowral, Campbelltown, Fairfield and Liverpool hospitals. Your GP will advise you if you should attend the clinic to be tested.

While most people with COVID-19 can be managed at home, South Western Sydney Local Health District is increasing the resources available to those who need hospital care. This has caused some other clinics and services to temporarily close.

The South Western Sydney Public Health Unit is working to reduce the spread of COVID-19. They will try to find out how a person became infected and who else needs to be tested.

## Where can I learn more?

- **healthdirect** - coronavirus: [healthdirect.gov.au](https://www.healthdirect.gov.au)
- **NSW Health** - COVID-19 resources including resources in other languages: [health.nsw.gov.au](https://www.health.nsw.gov.au)
- **South Western Sydney PHN** - Coronavirus information for community members: [swsphn.com.au](https://www.swsphn.com.au)
- **World Health Organisation** - coronavirus myth busting: [who.int](https://www.who.int)

This information is to be viewed by someone who has received a diagnosis from their doctor. It is not designed to be used to diagnose a condition or as a substitute for ongoing medical care

Health Resource Directory is an initiative of South Western Sydney PHN

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