COVID-19: Self-isolation

A new type of coronavirus was detected in late 2019. This virus can cause a severe respiratory illness called coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Coronavirus spreads through close contact with people. Self-isolation is a method being used to stop the spread of the virus.

There are many reasons why you may need to self-isolate, including:

- **You are being tested for coronavirus** - self-isolate until you get your results
- **Confirmed close contact** - you have been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19. You will need to self-isolate for 14 days
- **Recent traveller** - anyone arriving back in Australia from 16 March 2020 will need to self-isolate for 14 days
- **Confirmed infection** - you have tested positive for coronavirus. You will need to self-isolate until you no longer have symptoms and have been told you can stop self-isolating

What does self-isolation mean?

This means you must stay at your home or hotel room. If you live with other people, they do not have to leave. However, you should take steps to try to separate yourself from them. Avoid having visitors unless these are people who need to come over, such as home care services.

You cannot engage in your regular activities. You are not allowed to go to places where other people may be, such as work, school, or public areas. You are not able to go shopping (arrange home delivery or have someone bring them to you).

You should not be leaving where you live unless going to your doctor or the hospital, or if there is an emergency such as a fire.

This does not mean you always have to stay locked inside. If you live in a house, you can go into your garden or courtyard. If you live in a flat or an apartment, you can go onto your private balcony. You can also go to the community garden or courtyard if you are wearing a face mask.

How can I protect the people I live with?

If you live with other people, there are many steps you can take to protect them from becoming infected. This includes:

- Remain separated if you can by being in different rooms
- If you must be in the same room, wear a surgical mask. Wear a mask when using a shared area like the kitchen even if they are not there
- Use a separate bathroom to the others if this is possible
- Follow good **hand and cough hygiene** even when alone
- Avoid sharing household items such as dishes, cups, cutlery, towels, etc. Wash these items with soap and water after you use them. If you have a dishwasher or washing machine, use these to limit how much you and others handle the items
- Clean all household surfaces that are considered 'high-touch' at least once a day. These are surfaces we touch a lot during the day. This includes tables, benchtops, door handles, taps, fridge doors, toilets, remote controls, etc. Whoever is cleaning them should wear a mask and gloves

Accessing medical care

Most doctors are now offering telehealth (consulting by phone or video) and will continue to provide you with medical care

Your GP can write prescriptions and send a digital copy to the pharmacy. You can also send a digital photo of a repeat prescription you already have to the pharmacy

Check if they can deliver it to your home using the Home Medicines Service

If you need to see your doctor or go to the hospital, you can leave your home to do this. Wear a surgical mask and avoid public transport if possible

Self-care during self-isolation

Being in self-isolation for two weeks can be boring. It can also be stressful to not be able to have contact with people we care about. There is a risk that this will impact upon your mental health and wellbeing.

Make sure you are maintaining good self-care during this time. This includes:
- Exercise regularly. There are online fitness classes and videos showing how you how to exercise at home
- Where possible, keep up regular routines
- Maintain a healthy diet and get plenty of sleep
- Avoid alcohol and other drugs
- Try to maintain contact with others. This can be through phone or video calls
- Learn some relaxation techniques
- Use isolation as an opportunity to do activities you don't usually have time for

If you are finding it hard to cope, speak to your GP or consider calling a support line, such as:
- Lifeline **13 11 14**
- Kids Helpline **1800 551 800**
- Mensline Australia **1300 789 978**

What questions could I ask my doctor?

- *How long do I need to self-isolate?*
- *What do I do if my symptoms get worse?*
- *What about the people I live with?*
- *Who can I talk to if I need support?*
- *Can I go out at all?*
- *What I need to get my medication?*

Where can I learn more?

- **Department of Health** - Self-isolation (self-quarantine) for coronavirus: health.gov.au
- **NSW Health:** health.nsw.gov.au
  - Home isolation guidance for close contacts
  - Home isolation guidance for recently returned travellers
  - Home isolation guidance for people suspected to have COVID-19 (Coronavirus) infection
  - Home isolation guidance for people confirmed to have COVID-19 (Coronavirus) infection