

# COVID-19 – the basics

## What is Coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a group of viruses that can affect humans and animals. In humans, coronaviruses can cause mild illness, such as the common cold and gastrointestinal infections, as well as more severe illness, such as that caused by SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) and MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome).

There is currently an outbreak of a disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus that is called 'COVID-19'. It is a type of virus that can make humans and animals unwell. Illness can be mild or severe.

The viral infection started in a Province of China, which means the virus has mostly affected people who live in or who have travelled from mainland China.

## I recently travelled to mainland China. Do I need to stay home?

If you were in mainland China and even if you transited through mainland China (excluding Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan), on or after 1 February 2020, you must isolate yourself at home for 14 days after leaving mainland China.

If you have had contact with a person who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 (while they were infectious), you must stay at home for 14 days following the last time you were in contact with that person.

## What does it mean to be isolated?

Being isolated means that you need to stay at home. You are being asked not to leave your home unless you need medical attention.

It means you cannot go to work, school, or public areas, and you should not use public transport. Don't use a taxi or rideshare, and you need to tell people not to visit you.

Fact sheets with further information about isolation at home are available on the [ACT Health website](#).

## What are the symptoms?

Symptoms include:

- fever
- cough

- sore throat
- fatigue and
- shortness of breath.

It can take 2-14 days for symptoms to develop.

## I think I have COVID-19, what should I do?

The best thing to do is call your General Practitioner (GP) in the first instance. We ask that you do this before visiting the GP, to let them know you think you may have COVID-19, so the general practice can plan for your visit. Wear a face mask if you have one and avoid contact with others.

If you have serious symptoms, such as difficulty breathing, call triple zero (000).

## How can I avoid getting infected?

The risk of getting COVID-19 is very low.

It can spread from person-to-person, and at this stage it is not known how that occurs.

You can avoid catching or spreading germs by practising good hygiene. It's the best way to prevent spread of the virus.

- Wash your hands often, with soap and water, before and after eating as well as after using the toilet;
- Avoid close contact with others; and
- Cough and sneeze into your elbow or directly into a tissue and throw the tissue in a bin.

## Is there a vaccine for COVID-19?

There is currently no vaccine for COVID-19.

## How is COVID-19 treated?

Most of the time, symptoms will go away with time, and can be managed using medication to reduce the symptoms (such as fever, aches and pains).

Some people may get serious complications of infection and if that is the case, they will require care in hospital.

## Do I need to wear a face mask?

If you are feeling healthy, you don't need to wear a mask.

Masks are best used on sick people to help prevent the spread of germs when coughing or sneezing.

If you want to wear a mask, it is recommended that you call your local pharmacy ahead of time to check if they have stock available.

## Can I go to work or university? Can my kids go to school or childcare?

If you don't need to be isolated, you can go to work or university. If your children don't need to be isolated, they can go to school or childcare.

## Can I still travel overseas?

Check Smart Traveller (<http://www.smarttraveller.gov.au>) before you head overseas. There you will find COVID-19 outbreak information and current travel warning levels.

If you are isolated at home, you cannot travel on an airplane.

## Where can I get more information?

- Visit [www.health.act.gov.au/novelcoronavirus](http://www.health.act.gov.au/novelcoronavirus)
- Call the **Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080**. This line operates Monday–Friday from 8am to 8pm, and Saturdays from 8am to 5pm.
- Visit the Healthdirect website at [www.healthdirect.gov.au](http://www.healthdirect.gov.au) or call 1800 022 222 to speak to a nurse.
- Contact the Translating and Interpreting Service [www.tisnational.gov.au](http://www.tisnational.gov.au) if you need information in language.

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