



Health Condition Factsheet

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Stopping the spread of COVID-19

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

The virus spreads to others through the droplets an infected person sneezes or coughs out. The droplets can enter the body through the mucous membranes of your face. These are the wet parts of your face like your eyes, nose and mouth and they provide an easy pathway into your throat and lungs.

One of the biggest challenges of coronavirus is that people usually become infectious 24 hours before having any symptoms. Most people avoid getting too close to someone who is clearly sick. But we don't think about infection risks when they look healthy. This means that coronavirus can spread quickly without people realising.

To stop the spread of the virus in the community, there are several things that we can do.

Hand and cough hygiene

Coronavirus can live on different surfaces including your skin. If the virus gets on your hands and you touch your face, there is a risk of infection. Maintaining good hand and cough hygiene reduces this risk.

Hand washing and sanitisers kill the virus cells on your hands. Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Dry them with a paper towel or hand dryer. If your hands are not visibly dirty, you can use a hand sanitiser that has more than 60% alcohol.

You should wash or sanitise your hands:

- Before and after touching things that could be used by other people, such as pens, door handles, etc
- After going to the bathroom
- After coughing or sneezing
- Before entering an area where there are other people. This protects other people from anything on your hands

Avoid shaking hands with other people. If you do shake someone's hand, wash or sanitise your hands as soon as you can afterwards.

Avoid sharing things that would touch your mouth, such as cups, straws, bottles, or cutlery.

Do not cough or sneeze into your hands. Cough and sneeze into a tissue if you can. This should then be put into a bin and you should wash your hands.

If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or upper sleeve. Try to avoid coughing or sneezing around other people.

Washing your hands properly

Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds (such as singing 'happy birthday' twice)



Water and soap



Palm to palm



Between fingers



Focus on thumbs



Back of hands



Focus on wrists

Stopping the spread of COVID-19

Social Distancing

Coronavirus spreads from droplets that come out of an infected person's mouth and nose. They can come out when a person is talking. They come out a lot when a person coughs or sneezes.

The droplets do not float in the air. Instead they will fall and land on surfaces. However, if you are close enough, these droplets may land on you.

Social distancing reduces the risk of a virus being transmitted. This includes by people who look well but are infectious. By keeping a distance between yourself and other people, the risk of these droplets landing on you is very low.

Try to keep a distance of at least 1.5 metres between you and other people. This includes:

- **Avoiding physical contact** - like shaking hands, hugging or kissing
- **Avoiding small gatherings in enclosed spaces** - like cafes, meeting rooms
- **Avoiding crowds and mass gatherings** - these make it hard to keep 1.5 meters away from others

New rules about social distancing

The Australian Government has now put in rules about social distancing. Everyone is being asked to stay at home unless:

It is necessary such as shopping for groceries, going to a medical appointment, etc

For exercise this can only be with one other person

For work or study if you can work or study remotely, you should do this instead

Breaking the social distancing rules can result in fines and possible jail sentences

Protecting the vulnerable

For people who are vulnerable, the best thing to do is try to avoid visiting them at all. This is because for vulnerable people, COVID-19 often causes more serious symptoms. Vulnerable people include:

- People over the age of 60
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over the age of 50
- People living in an aged-care facility
- People in hospital
- People with very young babies
- People with weakened immune systems

Self-care during social distancing

The steps being taken to prevent the further spread of the coronavirus have resulted in many services being shut down. Many people are now working from home. Many social activities have had to stop. This can increase your sense of isolation. 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
- Drink water
- Get plenty of sleep
- Avoid alcohol and other drugs
- Try to maintain contact with others. This can be through phone, email or social media

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**