

# COVID-19: Information for people at higher risk of severe illness

## How do I know if I am at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19?

People at higher risk of severe illness include:

- People aged 60 years and older
- Pregnant women
- Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Pacific Islander people (from age 35 years and over)
- People with obesity, diabetes, serious cardiovascular disease, chronic lung disease (including severe asthma requiring hospitalisation in the last 12 months), severe chronic liver or kidney disease, active cancer or who are immunocompromised
- Some people with a disability including those with a disability that affects their lungs, heart or immune system
- Residents of aged care and disability care facilities
- People aged 18 years and older who are unvaccinated.

## What COVID-19 test should I do?

You should get a PCR test at a testing clinic as soon as possible if you are at higher risk of severe illness and have:

- COVID-19 symptoms, or
- have been recently exposed to someone with COVID-19.

PCR tests are more accurate and early diagnosis means you can access treatment earlier.

If you can't get a PCR test result quickly, do a rapid antigen test (if you have one) while you wait for the PCR test result. For further information, see the [What COVID-19 test should I do?](#) fact sheet.

## What happens if my COVID-19 test result is positive?

If you have a **positive PCR** test result, even if you don't have symptoms, you have COVID-19. You must follow the advice for people [testing positive to COVID-19 and managing COVID-19 safely at home](#). You will be sent a text message and asked to answer questions that help NSW Health connect you to care. If you are at higher risk of severe illness it is really important you answer these questions as soon as possible.

If your rapid antigen test is positive, [register the result with Service NSW](#) online or by calling **13 77 88**. Follow the advice for people [testing positive to COVID-19 and managing COVID-19 safely at home](#). You will be sent a link to similar questions from NSW Health by text message.

If you have symptoms but have tested negative on a rapid antigen test, you should have a PCR test to confirm your result as PCR tests are more accurate.

It is important to tell your doctor or NSW Health if you test positive to COVID-19 and how you are feeling during self-isolation so your condition can be monitored. You can also call the NSW Health Flu and COVID-19 Care at Home Support Line on **1800 960 933** for additional support.

## How will I know if I need further treatment for COVID-19?

NSW Health will ask you some more questions to check if you're eligible for antiviral or other early treatments for COVID-19. Available treatments can only be prescribed in the early stages of the disease.

You will need to provide the name of your GP or GP practice so NSW Health's clinical teams can contact them about your care. If your doctor determines it is safe for you to take antivirals or other early treatment, they will prescribe them for you.

It is a good idea to speak to your doctor now about antiviral medication or other early treatment so you can ask questions and understand your options before you get COVID-19.

## Simple ways to protect yourself

Protect yourself from severe illness by staying up to date with your COVID-19 vaccinations and get a flu vaccine as soon as possible. Some people may also be eligible for a winter booster (second booster), if it's been four months since your first booster dose or four months since you recovered from COVID-19 if you got it after your first booster dose.

You can also help reduce your risk by:

- Wearing a face mask indoors and when you can't physically distance from others
- Gather with friends or family outdoors or in well-ventilated areas. If available, ask friends and family to take a rapid antigen test before gathering
- Wash your hands and sanitise regularly
- Stay home if you are unwell and take a test.

## Staying well

Your mental health is important. Look after yourself by moving your body and staying connected with loved ones in person or virtually. Talk to someone when you need help or reach out to these trusted services:



- NSW Mental Health Line – 1800 011 511
- Beyond Blue helpline – 1800 512 348
- Lifeline – 13 11 14
- National Coronavirus Helpline - 1800 020 080. Choose option 8 for a free interpreting service.