

FAQs for parents and carers of a child who requires isolation due to COVID-19

These frequently asked questions (FAQs) provide guidance for parents and carers of a child who requires isolation due to COVID-19.

Confirmed case

My child has been tested positive for COVID-19

Does my child need to self-isolate?

Yes, your child must isolate at home and must not go to school or childcare until cleared by a designated health practitioner. As much as possible, separate your child from others in the home and do not allow any visitors in the home. Please ensure this is done in a safe manner so that young children still have adult supervision. For more advice about your situation, please speak with your local public health unit on 1300 066 055.

If you have a private garden or yard, your child may play outside.

Do others in my household need to self-isolate?

Yes, everyone in the household who spent significant time either face-to-face for at least 15 minutes or in the same closed space for at least two hours with your child while they were infectious is considered a close contact and must isolate for 14 days from the date of last contact. Please see [self-isolation guidelines for close contacts](https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/advice-for-contacts.aspx) (<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/advice-for-contacts.aspx>) for further information.

What if my child cannot isolate from everyone in the household?

It is important to separate your child from other household members where possible, even if they are close contacts, due to the ongoing risk of passing on COVID-19. However, it may not be possible to separate your child from their primary care giver or others in the household due to their age or other factors. In this case, anyone who has ongoing contact with your child must extend their own isolation period to 14 days after your child is considered by their doctor or the public health unit to be non-infectious.

Does my child need to wear a mask?

Not all age groups can use masks effectively and it may not be safe for all children. It is not necessary for children under 12 years of age to wear a mask. Parents may assist children in this age group with hand hygiene.

Teenagers over 12 years of age who are able to wear masks should do so when they are with others. For further advice, please see the latest advice on [face masks](https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/face-masks) (<https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/face-masks>).

Other people in the household should wear a mask whenever they are in contact with your child, whether your child is wearing a mask or not. If your child is unable to self isolate, please request advice from your local public health unit on 1300 066 055.

Can I provide emotional contact to my child without putting myself at risk?

This is an important part of providing care for your child. Parents may not be able to prevent cross infection within the family, however, following the below suggestions can help:

- avoid kisses on the face

- provide cuddles but avoid close face-to-face contact.

Ensure good hand hygiene is maintained – wash hands regularly and avoid touching your own face where possible.

What do I do if my child needs medical attention?

If your child is acutely unwell and requires emergency treatment, you should ring an ambulance and let them know that your child has been diagnosed with COVID-19 so they can take appropriate precautions. If non-emergency medical attention is required, call your health care provider to arrange review and also let them know that your child is a confirmed case of COVID-19 so they can arrange an appointment/assessment without exposing other people.

When can my child go back to school or childcare?

While some people who are diagnosed with novel coronavirus infection (COVID-19) will need to be admitted to hospital, most people will have mild illness and can stay at home in isolation.

For most people, release from isolation will be based on clinical features, such as duration of illness and time elapsed since resolution of all symptoms. The health service looking after your child, or your local public health unit, must make an assessment and advise you on when they can stop self-isolation.

You must follow the self-isolation rules. It is an offence not to comply and is punishable by fines, imprisonment or both.

If your child was not admitted to hospital or they were admitted to hospital for reasons not directly related to acute COVID-19 they can leave isolation once a designated health practitioner has confirmed:

- at least 10 days have passed since their onset of symptoms and
- there has been no fever and respiratory symptoms of the acute illness for the previous 72 hours.

If your child's illness was severe enough to need admission to hospital, they can be released from isolation once a designated health practitioner has confirmed:

- at least 14 days have passed since onset of symptoms and
- there has been no fever and respiratory symptoms of the acute illness for the previous 72 hours.

If your child's illness was managed in hospital and they are still experiencing symptoms they can be released from isolation once your designated health practitioner has confirmed:

- at least 14 days have passed since the onset of symptoms
- there have been substantial improvement in symptoms of the acute illness (including resolution of fever for the previous 72 hours but not including a persistent post-viral cough).
- they have had two consecutive negative COVID-19 PCR swabs collected at least 24 hours apart, at least 11 days from symptom onset, you can be released from isolation.

Other criteria may apply if their illness is prolonged and their fever or respiratory symptoms have not resolved after 14 days.

Once your child is no longer in isolation they should continue to practice hand hygiene, cough etiquette and physical distancing.

As a parent or carer of a confirmed case, will I require clearance from NSW Health to return to work?

No. However, as a close contact you will need to follow advice from the PHU. You will need to remain in isolation for 14 days after your child is considered to be non-infectious if you have continued to have contact with your child throughout their period of isolation. Please see [self-isolation guidelines for close contacts](https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/advice-for-contacts.aspx) (<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/advice-for-contacts.aspx>) for further information.

Suspect case

My child has COVID-19 symptoms but has no known contacts

Does my child need to self-isolate?

Yes, your child must isolate at home and must not go to school or childcare until the child receives a negative COVID-19 test result. As much as possible, separate your child from others in the home and do not allow any visitors in the home. Please ensure this is done in a safe manner so that young children still have adult supervision. For more advice about your situation, please speak with your local public health unit on 1300 066 055.

If you have a private garden or yard, your child may play outside.

Do others in my household need to self-isolate?

It is important to separate your child from other household members where possible, due to the ongoing risk of passing on COVID-19. However, it may not be possible to separate your child from their primary care giver or others in the household due to their age or other factors. In this case, anyone who has ongoing contact with your child must self-isolate at home until the child receives a negative test result.

When can my child go back to school or childcare?

Your child can return to school or childcare once the child receives a negative test result.

Close contact

Someone has tested positive for COVID-19 and my child has been identified as a close contact

Are you sure my child is a close contact?

When a person tests positive for COVID-19, public health units interview the person (depending on their age), their carer/s, and people from their school/childcare centre/workplace. Using timetables/attendance records and in consultation with the school/childcare centre/workplace, close contacts within the institution are identified based on the length of time of any contact with the person with COVID-19, types of activities done and characteristics of the institution.

If you think that your child has been identified as a close contact but has not been in close contact with the person who tested positive to COVID-19, you can contact your public health unit on 1300 066 055.

If my child is a close contact, do they require a COVID-19 test?

Yes, all people who have been identified to be a close contact of someone with COVID-19 will require a COVID-19 test regardless of symptoms.

If my child is a close contact, do they need to self-isolate?

Yes, all people who have been identified to be a close contact of someone with COVID-19 must self-isolate at home even if their COVID-19 test is negative. You will be notified about the required period of isolation for your child by an authorised contact tracer (this may be in the form of a text message). This period will be no more than 14 days. If your child is a household contact or is a close social contact, your child will have to have another test (test at day 10-12) prior to being released from isolation.

As much as possible, separate your child from others in the home. If your child is unable to self-isolate, please request advice from your local public health on 1300 066 055.

If you have a private yard/garden your child may play outside.

Do others in my household need to self-isolate?

Generally other people in the household of a close contact do not need to isolate. However, in some families it may be very difficult to isolate children from other family members, either due to the age/behaviour of this child

or their siblings, or the physical constraints of the home. Siblings who cannot be effectively isolated from their sibling who is a close contact, should not attend school or childcare, until the close contact child has been cleared to leave isolation.

Any household member that works in a high risk setting (school, childcare centre, aged care facility, hospital, correctional facility, disability services or is a healthcare worker), and is unable to effectively isolate from the close-contact child, should not attend work until the child has been cleared to leave isolation. Please call your local public health unit on 1300 066 055 to discuss your circumstances.

Scenario 1 – family not able to effectively isolate within the household

Meg has three children: a daughter aged 2 years old who goes to childcare and two sons aged 6 and 8 years who go to primary school. The childcare centre has told Meg that there has been a confirmed case of COVID-19 at the childcare centre. The Public Health Unit rang Meg to let her know that her 2 year old daughter is considered to be a close contact and must get tested and self-isolate for 14 days.

Meg decided that it was not possible for them to effectively isolate from each other in their home, due to her daughter being so young. Meg's sons won't attend school for the duration of her daughter's 14 day isolation period. If Meg's daughter has remained well, she will need to have a test usually on day 10 of the self-isolation period before she can go back to childcare. Her two brothers will not require testing as long as Meg's daughter's test results are negative.

Scenario 2 – family able to effectively isolate within the household

Chau and Thuan have two children: a son aged 13 years old and a daughter aged 17 years old. Both attend the same high school. A friend of their daughter at school was diagnosed with COVID-19 and their daughter is considered a close contact and must get tested and self isolate for 14 days. Their son did not have contact with the daughter's friend who is the case.

After speaking to the Public Health Unit, Chau and Thuan decided that as their children are older and the house is large enough, they would isolate their daughter from the rest of the family for the 14-day isolation period in their home. Chau and Thuan and their son did not have to isolate and continued going to school and work.

Does my child need to wear a mask?

Not all age groups can use masks effectively and it may not be safe for all children. It is not necessary for children under 12 years of age to wear a mask. Parents may assist children in this age group with hand hygiene.

Teenagers over 12 years of age who are able to wear masks should do so when they are with others. For further advice, please see the latest advice on [face masks](#).

Other people should wear a mask whenever they are in contact with your child, whether your child is wearing a mask or not.

Monitor your child for symptoms

While your child is in isolation, monitor for any symptoms, particularly fever (37.5 ° or higher), cough, sore throat, shortness of breath (difficulty breathing), runny nose, loss of taste or loss of smell.

Other COVID-19 symptoms include fatigue, muscle pain, joint pain, headache, diarrhoea, nausea/vomiting, loss of appetite, unexplained chest pain and conjunctivitis.

If your child develops any symptoms they will need to be tested. If your child tests negative, they must still isolate for the full 14-day period from their contact with a case, as COVID-19 may take up to 14 days to develop.

What do I do if my child needs medical attention?

If your child is acutely unwell and requires emergency treatment, you should ring an ambulance and let them know that your child is a close contact of someone with COVID-19 so they can take appropriate precautions. If non-emergency medical attention is required, call your health care provider to arrange review and also let them know that your child is a close contact of someone with COVID-19 so they can arrange an appointment/assessment without exposing other people.

If non-emergency medical attention is required, call ahead to your health care provider to arrange assessment and travel by private transport.

When can my child go back to school or childcare?

Your child will need to be tested before leaving isolation. If your child remains well after their 14 day isolation period and they have received a negative result from their day 10 test, they can leave isolation and return to school or childcare.

Someone has tested positive for COVID-19 at my child's school/childcare and my child has not been identified as a close contact

Does my child need to self-isolate?

If your child **did not** have any significant close contact with a person who was infectious with COVID-19 and is feeling well, they do not need to self-isolate and can go to school or childcare as normal.

However, please look out for any symptoms, particularly fever (37.5°C or higher), cough, sore throat, or shortness of breath (difficulty breathing). If symptoms develop, keep your child away from other people and seek help from a healthcare provider as soon as possible such as seeing a doctor (call ahead to alert your doctor about the possibility of COVID-19 before visiting) OR attending a COVID-19 testing clinic. If your child is tested for COVID-19, they should isolate at home and not attend school or childcare until the child receives the test result.

Do others in my household need to self-isolate?

No, they are not required to self-isolate.

Further information

The following pages provide further information and tips for managing isolation and preventing transmission of COVID-19:

- [Self-isolation guidance for people confirmed to have COVID-19 \(coronavirus\) infection](https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/advice-for-confirmed.aspx)
<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/advice-for-confirmed.aspx>
- [Self-isolation guidance for close contacts](https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/advice-for-contacts.aspx)
<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/advice-for-contacts.aspx>
- [Information about COVID-19 \(coronavirus\) and NSW schools, universities and childcare centres](https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/education)
<https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/education>
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) and children in Australia](https://raisingchildren.net.au/guides/coronavirus-covid-19-guide/coronavirus-and-children-in-australia)
<https://raisingchildren.net.au/guides/coronavirus-covid-19-guide/coronavirus-and-children-in-australia>