

# COVID-19 ADVICE FOR THE NSW COMMUNITY 15 MARCH 2020

## SIMPLE STEPS FOR SLOWING THE SPREAD BY SOCIAL DISTANCING

### ACT NOW



### Slowing the spread of coronavirus in NSW

NSW residents should act NOW to reduce the risk of infection from coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

Social distancing means we reduce the number of close physical and social contacts we have with one another.

When social distancing actions are combined with good personal hygiene measures the spread of a pandemic through the community can be slowed. This helps protect the most vulnerable members of the community and reduces the impact of the pandemic on essential, life-saving health services.

There are many actions individuals, employers and organisations can take now to promote social distancing and help reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection in our community.

The following advice is based on the current stage of the COVID-19 outbreak in NSW. As the situation is evolving rapidly, this advice may need to be updated with additional measures.

Please check the [NSW Health COVID-19 website](https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/coronavirus) at <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/coronavirus> for updates.

### Simple steps for social distancing can make a big difference

NSW residents are urged to take simple steps NOW to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

- Be part of the solution.
- Act NOW on what you can do.
- Keep your distance from others as much as possible but stay connected.
- Work local, study local, shop local, play local.
- Cloud not crowd.

### Staying connected as a community

Keep connected as a community by taking some simple steps.

- Stay informed. Use information from reputable sources including the [NSW Health COVID-19 website](https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/coronavirus) and the [NSW Health Facebook page](#).
- Support others in our community. Look out for neighbours and family.
- Keep connected to your family, friends, work colleagues through phone, email and social media.

### Take personal action to reduce exposures and stay healthy

The most important action is to practice good hand hygiene.

Take the following steps to reduce your exposure and chances of getting ill with COVID-19:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitiser with at least 60 per cent alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, throw soiled tissues in the bin and clean your hands with soap and water or sanitiser. If you don't have a tissue, cover your sneeze or cough with your elbow.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces each day.
- Stay home if you are sick and don't expose others. If you are unwell with flu-like symptoms, do not go outside your property or home, do not go to work, school or shops unless it is essential.

- Get a flu shot when it becomes available.
- Talk with your doctor and pharmacist about getting an emergency supply of any medications being taken regularly by you or your family.
- Stop shaking hands, hugging or kissing as a greeting.
- Avoid crowds if possible. If not, keep the time short.
- Avoid small gatherings in enclosed spaces, for example family celebrations.
- Attempt to keep a distance of 1.5 metres between yourself and other people where possible.
- Avoid visiting vulnerable people, such as those in aged care facilities or hospitals, infants, or people with compromised immune systems due to illness or medical treatment.
- Visit shops sparingly, buy food online, consider home delivery and take-aways.
- Use debit and credit cards instead of cash and make use of online and self-serve transactions (for example Opal cards on public transport).
- Use public transport in off-peak periods if you can.
- Re-consider overseas and interstate travel plans.
- Wear a surgical mask (single-use face mask) when you are in the sick person's room, if available.
- Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces regularly.
- Dispose of tissues and masks in a sealed plastic bag and put in the usual household waste.
- If your family member becomes very unwell, get medical help by calling your GP, calling healthdirect on 1800 022 222, or visit the emergency department at your local hospital. An ambulance is not needed to transport people to GPs or a hospital unless their condition is serious. Alternative means of transport should be used including private car driven by a family member or an existing close contact (not bus, train, taxi or ride-share such as Uber).
- If symptoms are severe and it is a medical emergency, such as shortness of breath at rest or difficulty breathing, dial 000 and ask for an ambulance.

## Actions for all travellers returning to or arriving in Australia

- All overseas travellers must self-isolate for 14 days on return to Australia. This applies to everyone, even if you have no symptoms.

## Actions for people caring for a sick family member

If you look after or provide care for a sick family member with flu-like symptoms, remember to:

- Care for the sick person in a single room.
- Keep the door closed and windows open where possible.
- Keep the number of carers to a minimum.
- Always use a hand sanitiser before and after entering the room, or wash hands with soap and water.
- Keep the sick person's crockery and utensils separate to the rest of the household.

## Actions for parents and guardians

If you are a parent or guardian, consider the following actions:

- If your child/young person is unwell, do not send them to childcare or school. The child should remain at home until symptoms resolve.
- Promote good hygiene including handwashing with soap
- Consider whether your child/young person's out-of-school activities are essential.
- Prepare for your child/young person to study at home should this become necessary.
- Plan for the possibility of your child/young person not attending childcare or school because of any future closure or because they are unwell. Discuss with your employer if needed.
- If your child/young person's institution is closed, monitor their whereabouts, keep them at home, and prevent them from group meetings with friends/classmates.
- Consider whether your family's holiday plans are essential.

## Actions for an organisation, workplace or employer

Organisations and employers who are responsible for a workplace or venue should start to take actions now to reduce the risk of transmission of coronavirus. This includes any venue, such as a school, university, office building or any workplace. These actions should include:

- Consider whether activities/events can be postponed, reduced in size/frequency or cancelled.
- Cancel non-essential activities such as business travel, study visits, extra-curricular activities and sporting events.
- Encourage flexible working arrangements including working from home and off-peak travel, and consider whether staff work stations can be more widely spaced.
- Purchase COVID-19 prevention supplies, for example alcohol hand sanitisers.
- Provide and promote hand sanitisers at building entrances.
- Ensure high standards of routine environmental cleaning. Standard cleaning products are fine.
- Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces regularly, including desks and keyboards.
- Open windows, enhance airflow, adjust air conditioning.
- Promote preventive actions amongst your staff - lead by example.
- Encourage personal hygiene, such as use of hand sanitiser or handwashing with soap by all staff .
- Avoid large indoor meetings and lunchrooms and use outdoor venues if possible.
- Plan for increased levels of staff absences.
- Plan for what to do if staff arrive sick at work.
- Employers should refer to SafeWork NSW's [COVID-19: Advice and guidance for NSW workplaces](#).

## Actions for childcare centres, kindergartens, schools

There is no current recommendation for childcare centres, kindergartens or schools to close and it's important to try keeping things as normal as possible. However, educational settings, including boarding schools, could be places where there is a higher risk of transmission of COVID-19. These settings should now:

- Take all the actions listed above under Actions for an organisation, workplace or venue.
- Consider whether any activities can be postponed, reduced in size/frequency or replaced.
- Actively encourage sick children/students and staff to stay at home.
- Direct and supervise preventive actions such as good hand washing before and after eating food, either through washing hands with soap and water, or use of hand sanitiser by students according to need.
- Prepare for senior students and staff to study/work from home if required.
- Plan ways to reduce in-person contact for students and staff.
- Enable separation of students and avoid queuing, as much as possible.
- Cancel assemblies and consider staggering student breaks to limit movements and contacts between student/class groups.
- Ensure the highest hygiene practices among food handlers.
- Identify a space that can be used to isolate students and staff who become sick.
- Alert your agency or department about large increases in student and staff absenteeism due to flu-like illnesses.
- Keep students, parents and staff informed of the actions you are taking.
- The [Department of Education](#) and [Catholic Schools NSW](#) have information on COVID-19 for schools and parents.

## Actions for TAFE, colleges and universities

There is no current recommendation for these settings to close. However, educational settings such as universities could be places where there is a higher risk of transmission of COVID-19. These settings should now:

- Take all the actions listed above under Actions for an organisation, workplace or venue.
- Consider whether any activities can be postponed, reduced in size/frequency or replaced with online learning.
- Actively encourage sick students and staff to stay at home.
- Encourage personal hygiene, such as use of hand sanitiser or handwashing with soap by all staff and students.
- Prepare for students and staff to study/work from home if required, including online learning.
- Where programs require face to face interaction or physical environments such as laboratories, reduce the size of the classes, encourage regular hand hygiene of participants (hand sanitisers at entry points) and ensure cleaning addresses areas of high touch points for students and staff.
- Plan ways to reduce in-person contact for students and staff.
- Limit movements and contacts between student/class groups.
- Enable separation of students and avoid queuing.
- Identify a space that can be used to isolate students and staff who become sick.
- Keep students and staff informed of the actions you are taking.

## Actions for health and community service providers including for vulnerable people

Providers of health and community services should now:

- Take all the actions listed above under Actions for an organisation, workplace or venue.
- Consider whether your service can be limited or reduced to avoid community contact in the best interests of your clients.
- Consider whether your activities can be adjusted to enable separation of clients, avoid queuing and close confines.
- Stop travel of clients, staff and volunteers unless vital for care reasons.
- Consider the needs of older adults, persons with disabilities, and others with access and functional needs in your response.
- Other measures to protect vulnerable populations should be taken, including reduction of visitors to residential and aged care facilities for example.

## Actions for transport carriers

There is no recommendation to stop using public transport at this time.

The following actions should be considered by transport providers, including airplanes, trains, trams and buses:

- Take all the actions listed above under Actions for an organisation, workplace or venue.
- Consider whether your transport service can be adjusted to increase separation of travellers and avoid queuing.
- Plan ways to reduce in-person contact for travellers and staff.
- Actively encourage sick passengers and staff to stay at home.
- Open windows and adjust air conditioning to increase airflow.
- Ensure the highest hygiene practices among catering staff.
- Consider using advertising space for public health messages around COVID-19.
- Keep staff informed of the actions you are taking.

## Advice for mass gatherings

Mass gatherings have the potential for serious public health consequences if they are not planned and managed carefully. From Monday 16 March 2020, the following recommendations will come into effect in NSW that focus on gatherings of people taking place on an organised basis:

- Non-essential gatherings should be limited to less than 500 people.
- Non-essential meetings of critical workforces such as healthcare workers and emergency service workers should be limited.

Venues with high volumes of movement of people such as shopping centres should take all the measures required at any workplace and should focus on environmental cleaning in particular. Such venues are not required to close at the current time.

The most up to date information is available on the [NSW Health COVID-19 website](#).

