

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 70 years and older
- People aged 50 or over with additional risk factors, including obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, chronic lung disease (including moderate or severe asthma requiring inhaled steroids), neurological disease, severe chronic liver or kidney disease, active cancer or those who are not up to date with recommended vaccination
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 30 years and over with additional risk factors listed above
- People who are moderately to severely immunocompromised of any age
- People with significant or complex disability
- Pregnant women
- Children with complex chronic conditions.

If you live in a remote area and have reduced access to healthcare or are a resident in an aged care or disability care facility, discuss your risk with your GP as you may be eligible for COVID-19 antiviral treatment or additional supportive care.

Protecting yourself from COVID-19 if you are at higher risk of severe illness

Speak to your doctor now before you get COVID-19 to learn about what you should do if you get sick. Things you should discuss with your doctor include:

- Getting a pathology form for a COVID-19 PCR test from your doctor in case you get symptoms
- Asking your doctor to fill in an [antiviral pre-assessment form for people at higher risk of severe illness](#). This form helps you know if you are eligible for antiviral medicines and which treatments will work best for you.
- How to access antiviral medicines quickly if you test positive for COVID-19.

Ways to help reduce your risk of COVID-19:

- Staying [up to date](#) with your COVID-19 vaccinations.
- Wear a face mask indoors and when you can't physically distance from others, such as on public transport
- Gather with friends or family outdoors or in well-ventilated areas. If possible, ask friends and family to take a rapid antigen test before gathering
- Wash your hands and use hand sanitiser regularly.

What should I do if I get symptoms?

If you have any cold and flu symptoms (such as runny nose, sore throat, fever, cough) it is important to get tested for COVID-19 as soon as possible so you can access early treatment including antiviral medicines. Stay at home until your acute symptoms have gone no matter the outcome of the test

If you have any new cold and flu symptoms within 4 weeks of recovering from COVID-19, speak to your doctor as they may recommend further testing.

What COVID-19 test should I do?

You should get a PCR (nose and throat swab) test 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 (RAT) while you wait for the PCR test result.

If your RAT is positive, register the result with Service NSW online or by calling 13 77 88. If you have symptoms but have tested negative on a RAT, you should have a PCR test to confirm your result as PCR tests are more accurate.

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 tested positive for COVID-19, it is important to contact your doctor straight away and let them know about your positive test result. Your doctor will discuss your care and provide you with medical support if needed, such as a prescription for antiviral medicines if you are eligible. These medications work best when taken as soon as possible.
- Follow the [advice for people testing positive to COVID-19 and managing COVID-19 safely at home](#).
- If you are concerned about your symptoms, you should contact your doctor, or call the National Coronavirus Helpline on 1800 020 080 who will connect you to care.
- Call Triple Zero (000) immediately if you have difficulty breathing, develop chest pressure or pain, or have severe headaches or dizziness. Tell them you have COVID-19.

For further information about COVID-19, visit nsw.gov.au/covid-19.

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
- NSW Health COVID-19 Support Line (for practical support while staying at home) – 1800 943 553
- National Coronavirus Helpline - 1800 020 080. Choose option 8 for a free interpreting service.