

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 you are a resident in an aged care or disability care facility, discuss your risk with your doctor. You may be eligible for COVID-19 antiviral medicines or additional 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 what you should do if you get sick. Topics 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 complete a [pre-assessment action plan for respiratory infections](#). This form helps you know what test to do if you get sick and if you may be eligible for antiviral medicines
- How to access antiviral medicines quickly if you test positive for COVID-19.

Ways to help reduce your risk of COVID-19:

- Stay up to date with your [recommended 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 not to visit if they have any cold or flu symptoms
- Wash your hands and use hand sanitiser regularly.

What should I do if I get symptoms?

If you have any cold or flu symptoms (such as a runny nose, sore throat, fever, cough), talk to your doctor and get tested for COVID-19 as soon as possible. This will help you get early treatment such as antiviral medicines. Stay at home until your acute symptoms have gone even if your test is negative.

What COVID-19 test should I do?

There are 2 types of tests you can take to check if you have COVID-19:

- A rapid antigen test (RAT) that you can do yourself
- A PCR test that is taken by your doctor, or your doctor might give you a pathology referral form that you take to a pathology provider

Before you have symptoms: Speak to your doctor about which test is right for you before you get sick. Ask your doctor about having a PCR test and if they recommend antiviral medicines or other treatments for COVID-19 if you test positive.

What if you already have symptoms? Do a RAT as soon as possible and contact your doctor for testing advice. Your doctor may also recommend a COVID-19 PCR test. Early diagnosis means you can access antiviral medicines quickly. [Read more on antiviral medicines including how to access them if you are eligible.](#)

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

- Contact your doctor straight away and tell them your test result is positive. Your doctor will discuss your care and give you medical support if needed. This may be a prescription for antiviral medicines if you are eligible. COVID-19 antiviral medicines work best if taken as soon as possible, and within 5 days from when your symptoms start
- Follow the [advice for people testing positive to COVID-19 and managing COVID-19 safely at home](#)
- If you are concerned about your symptoms, contact your doctor. If you can't contact your doctor, use the [Service Finder](#) to find one near you, or call healthdirect on 1800 022 222 (free and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week). Healthdirect is staffed by registered nurses who can provide expert health advice and connect you to care. If you need an interpreter, the nurse will arrange one for you
- 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 mentally well

Your mental health is important. Look after yourself by moving your body and staying connected with loved ones. 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
- Kids Helpline – 1800 55 1800
- Service NSW - [mental wellbeing resources](#)