CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Australian Border Force Overview

The Australian Border Force (ABF) is taking action to maintain vital international links, protect our citizens and visitors and support the needs of our community in response to the challenge of COVID-19.

Sustaining legitimate international supply chains and global trade will be critical over the coming months. Australia recognises that all WCO members rely on international trade in our supply chains for essential goods, including in sourcing medical and protective products. It is important that the customs measures that WCO members may implement in response to COVID-19 do not unduly or unintentionally disrupt these vital international trade links.

This document provides an overview of the ABF organisational response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

ABF’s Current Practices

- ABF has implemented various practices and measures with the aim of mitigating the threat of COVID-19. It is not yet possible to measure the effectiveness of these practices given the unique and unprecedented nature of the situation. The ABF and the Department of Home Affairs (Department) will continue to evolve their approach to minimise associated risks of COVID-19. ABF would be willing to share any findings and lessons learnt with the WCO through a post-incident report, which may assist our responses to future scenarios.

- A whole of government approach is fundamental to managing a challenge on the scale of COVID-19. In the Australian context, the Department and the ABF continue to work with other Australian Public Service agencies to maintain a coordinated approach to COVID-19.
  - The Department of Health is the Australian Government’s lead in guiding and providing up to date advice to all government and private organisations (including the public).

- In Australia’s experience, it is vital to provide coordinated and up-to-date advice to all public service staff regarding the safety precautions that should be applied to minimise the risks from the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19).
  - Australia provides information on COVID-19 to staff through communication channels including, but not limited to, fact sheets, regular messaging from senior executives, including the ABF Commissioner, Secretary and the Chief Medical Officer.

- The advice provided to date includes information for vulnerable staff and those working on the front line (airports and seaports), and appropriate use of personal protective equipment where required.
  - Staff are being encouraged to practice good hand hygiene and the information is being displayed throughout workplaces.
Staff who display symptoms of COVID-19 are urged to follow the Department of Health advice in regard to self-isolation and to seek medical assistance.

- The Department and ABF have implemented arrangements to replace face-to-face meetings and modify the ways our staff interact. Attached for reference are some of the information sheets provided to our staff that outline the practices that have been adopted to minimise the risk associated with COVID-19.
- The unprecedented COVID-19 situation has illustrated the importance of having effective business continuity plans and arrangements in place.
- The ABF acknowledges that Supply Chain Integrity, including the flow of goods, is a critical priority, pre, at, and post border. The ABF has put into place contingency planning to ensure all critical priorities are managed appropriately.

**Expected Challenges**

- The uncertainty and unpredictability of COVID-19 presents challenges for the ABF to forward plan and deliver against its operational priorities.
- COVID-19 will impact ABF personnel that support and facilitate international trade and travel in partnership with industry stakeholders (airlines, cargo handlers etc.).
- COVID-19 continues to pose a serious health risk to the ABF’s frontline staff undertaking border law enforcement activities.
- COVID-19 may also affect the ABF’s ability to co-ordinate and deliver standard business operations if large numbers of staff are unable to work and business continuity arrangements have to be sustained for a prolonged period. Developing mechanisms and arrangements that allow for the redeployment of staff with essential skills to critical business operations is vital.
- The ABF, like other government agencies, will need to ensure that our staff are supported from a health and welfare perspective to enable them to continue to perform their day-to-day functions in light of the current unprecedented environment.
- Providing coordinated, factual and up-to-date information in a timely manner to staff is critical to their well-being and continued effective and focussed performance.

**Relevant Attachment and Websites**

**Websites**


**ABF flyers for travellers [TBC]**

- [Advice for cruise ship passengers](#)
- [Restrictions on entry to Australian relating to COVID-19 for cruise ships](#)
- [Advice on precautionary self-isolation for all travellers entering Australia](#)

**Department of Health fact sheets**

- [COVID-19 Fact sheet – information for employers](#)
- [COVID-19 Fact sheet – information for border staff](#)
- [COVID-19 Fact sheet - information for cargo and mail workers](#)
- [COVID-19 Fact sheet – what you need to know](#)
ADVICE TO CRUISE SHIP PASSENGERS

On 15 March 2020 the Prime Minister of Australia announced that international cruise ship operations will cease and all travellers entering Australia from 0001 AEDST 16 March 2020 must undertake a precautionary self-isolation period for 14 days upon departure from your last overseas port.

We are working with the cruise industry to implement the restriction, particularly to bring everyone currently on a cruise safely back to port and on to their home destinations either in Australia or overseas.

The self-isolation period applies to any traveller entering Australia, inclusive of Australian citizens and permanent residents.

- For Australian citizens and residents you can self-isolate at your home.
- Australian citizens and residents who have domestic connections to home, you may travel to the airport for your flight. If you are not heading directly to the airport you must self-isolate at your hotel or other accommodation until you head to the airport.
- For international visitors with onward connections (domestic and international) you can go to the airport to make your domestic connection and complete your period of self-isolation at this point. You are required to self-isolate at your hotel until 14 days have passed since your last overseas port or until you head to the airport to make your way home.

The Australian Government is closely monitoring the situation and this advice will be updated as needed. It is important to continue to monitor the ABF website and the Department of Health website.
RESTRICTIONS ON ENTRY TO AUSTRALIA RELATING TO COVID-19 FOR CRUISE SHIPS

30 day suspension on cruise ships

On 15 March 2020, the Australian Government announced a full restriction on arrivals of any cruise ship that has left a foreign port. The restrictions are inclusive of direct arrivals and Round Trip Cruises (RTC). This measure will be reviewed after 30 days.

The health, welfare and safety of Australians, both at home and overseas, is the highest priority of the Australian Government.

From 0001 AEDST 16 March 2020, Australia will deny entry to any cruise ship that has left a foreign port, with the exception of:

- Australian-flagged vessels.
- International cruise ships en route having departed their last overseas port and destined for Australia.
- Australian cruise vessels (domestic cruise ships) operating within the Australian Exclusive Economic Zone can continue to operate without restriction.
- RTC’s that are already in progress and currently returning to Australia.

Cruise ships that do not meet the above exemptions, may be approved through the Maritime Traveller Processing Committee (MTPC). These approved cruise ships will be required to go to Brisbane or Sydney.

Crew

- Cruise ship crew must self-isolate for 14 days* or for the duration of their stay whichever is shorter.

Cruise Passengers entering Australia

On 15 March 2020, the Australian Government announced that all travellers entering Australia from 0001 AEDST 16 March 2020 must undertake a precautionary self-isolation period for up to 14 days* upon entry to Australia. This applies to any traveller entering Australia, inclusive of Australian citizens and permanent residents. For any travellers who are entering Australia for less than 14 days*, they must self-isolate for the entire duration of their stay.

These measures apply to all travellers entering Australia via aircraft and cruise ships.

Travellers with existing domestic transfer bookings or arrangements may complete their domestic transfer and commence their precautionary self-isolation period (of up to 14 days*) at the final destination.
The travel restrictions for mainland China, Iran, the Republic of Korea and Italy remain in place.

All travellers will be notified of the precautionary self-isolation requirement through updated a health fact sheet. Travellers may be required to complete a form confirming that they understand they are required to complete the self-isolation period for up to 14 days*.

Additional messages for travellers

- On 15 March 2020, the Australian Government restricted all cruise ships from entering Australia for 30 days, inclusive of direct arrivals and Round Trip Cruises.

- Cruise ship crew must self-isolate for 14 days* or for the duration of their stay whichever is shorter.

- Australian citizens and residents may complete a domestic transfer and commence their precautionary 14 day* self-isolation period in the final destination.
  o While in transit, they must remain in the airport or if they have a layover, they must self-isolate in their accommodation for that transit period.

- Foreign nationals must complete the 14 day* isolation period or they may disembark the cruise ship and return to their home country.
  o While in transit, they must remain in the airport or if they have a layover, they must self-isolate in their accommodation for that transit period.

* Please note that the 14 day period commences from the day of departure from the last port of embarkation. As an example, if a ship has travelled for 10 days prior to arrival in Australia, the self-isolation period will only be the remaining four days. This is only applicable provided no crew member falls ill or displays symptoms of illness.

These arrangements are kept under constant review and will be updated as necessary.

The ABF appreciates your ongoing support and cooperation during this time. For additional support, please contact the Border Operations Centre at +61 1300 368 126.
RESTRICTIONS ON ENTRY TO AUSTRALIA

Precautionary self-isolation requirement for all travellers entering Australia

On 15 March 2020, the Australian Government announced that all travellers entering Australia from 0001 AEDST 16 March 2020 must undertake a precautionary self-isolation period for up to 14 days upon entry to Australia. This applies to any traveller entering Australia, inclusive of Australian citizens and permanent residents. For any travellers who are entering Australia for less than 14 days, they must self-isolate for the entire duration of their stay.

These measures apply to all travellers entering Australia via aircraft and cruise ships.

The travel restrictions for mainland China, Iran, the Republic of Korea and Italy remain in place.

All travellers will be notified of the precautionary self-isolation requirement through updated a health fact sheet. Travellers may be required to complete a form confirming that they understand they are required to complete the self-isolation period for up to 14 days.

For travellers transiting through Australia

- Any travellers, who are transiting through Australia to an international destination must remain in the airport, or self-isolate (for up to 14 days) in their accommodation, for the duration of their planned transit.

For aircraft

- Airline crew (including medivac crew) are exempt from the travel restrictions provided the appropriate personal protective equipment is utilised during the journey and in public spaces (including airports), and the crew member is not displaying any symptoms.
  - This includes off-shift crew who are travelling as passengers on an aircraft to reposition at another location. The same process is to be followed for this cohort as on-shift crew.

- Travellers with existing domestic transfer booking or arrangements may complete their domestic transfer and commence their precautionary self-isolation period (of up to 14 days) at the final destination.
  - While in transit, they must remain in the airport or if they have an overnight layover, they must self-isolate in their accommodation for the duration of their transit period.
Additional messages for travellers

- From 0001 AEDST 16 March 2020, if you arrive in Australia you are required to undertake a precautionary self-isolation period of up to 14 days upon entry into Australia.

- If you need to transit domestically, you may complete this transit and then begin your precautionary self-isolation period of up to 14 days provided you are an Australian citizen or resident returning to your home location, or are a foreign national and have existing transfer arrangements.
  - If you have a layover, you must remain in the airport or self-isolate in your accommodation for the transit period.

- If you do not complete your 14 day precautionary self-isolation period after arriving in Australia, you may put the health and wellbeing of Australians at risk.

Talking points for industry

- From 0001 AEDST 16 March 2020, all travellers arriving in Australia are required to undertake a precautionary self-isolation period of up to 14 days after entry into Australia.

- Travellers may complete domestic transits and then begin their precautionary 14 day self-isolation period.
  - They must remain in the airport or if they have a layover, they must self-isolate in their accommodation for their transit period.

- Travellers arriving in Australia who do not complete their 14 day precautionary self-isolation period may put the health and wellbeing of Australia at risk.

These arrangements are kept under constant review and will be updated as necessary.

The ABF appreciates your ongoing support and cooperation during this time. For additional support, please contact the Border Operations Centre at +61 1300 368 126.
Information for employers

People who have returned from a country or region that is at high or moderate risk for COVID-19 should monitor their health closely. If you develop symptoms including a fever and cough you should isolate yourself immediately and urgently seek medical attention. Go to www.health.gov.au/covid19-travellers for the list of at-risk countries.

People who think they may have been in close contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus, should also monitor their health and seek urgent medical attention.

This information sheet should be read in conjunction with the ‘What you need to know’ and ‘Isolation guidance’ information sheets found at www.health.gov.au/covid19-resources. Go to www.health.gov.au/covid19-travellers for the current list of higher risk countries.

Can staff go to work?

Specific requirements are in place for people who have returned from a country or region that is at high or moderate risk for COVID-19, or think may they have been in close contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus. Go to www.health.gov.au/covid19-travellers for the list of at-risk countries and isolation requirements.

Employees who are in isolation should alert their employer. Depending on the type of work, and provided the employee is well, they may want to discuss alternative arrangements such as working from home. See the ‘Isolation guidance’ information sheets at www.health.gov.au/covid19-resources

What should I tell my staff?

Employers should provide information and brief all employees and contract staff, including domestic and cleaning staff where applicable, on relevant information and procedures to prevent the spread of coronavirus. You should inform staff who meet the above criteria that they should remain isolated in their home. Employees should advise their employer if they develop symptoms during the isolation period, particularly if they have been in the workplace. Public health authorities may contact employers in the event an employee is confirmed to have coronavirus.

What precautions should I take when cleaning?

When cleaning, staff should minimise the risk of being infected with coronavirus by wearing gloves and using alcohol-based hand sanitiser before and after wearing gloves. If cleaning rooms or areas of the workplace where a person with a confirmed case of coronavirus or a person in isolation has frequented staff may wish to wear a surgical mask as an added precaution. If a confirmed case of coronavirus or a person in isolation is in a room that cleaning staff need to enter, they may ask them to put on a surgical mask if they have one available.
Can food and water spread coronavirus?

Some coronaviruses can potentially survive in the gastrointestinal tract however, food-borne spread is unlikely when food is properly cooked and prepared. With good food preparation and good hand hygiene, it is highly unlikely that you will become infected with coronavirus through food.

It is unknown at this time if the virus is able to survive in sewerage. Those who work closely with sewerage should take the same precautions as those outlined above for cleaners. Drinking water in Australia is high quality and is well treated. It is not anticipated that drinking water will be affected by coronavirus.

How can we help prevent the spread of coronavirus?

Practising good hand and sneeze/cough hygiene is the best defence against most viruses. You should:

- wash your hands frequently with soap and water, before and after eating, and after going to the toilet
- cover your cough and sneeze, dispose of tissues, and use alcohol-based hand sanitiser
- and if unwell, avoid contact with others (stay more than 1.5 metres from people).

More information

While coronavirus is of concern, it is important to remember that most people displaying symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat or tiredness are likely suffering with a cold or other respiratory illness—not coronavirus.

For the latest advice, information and resources, go to www.health.gov.au

Call the National Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you require translating or interpreting services, call 131 450.

The phone number of your state or territory public health agency is available at www.health.gov.au/state-territory-contacts

If you have concerns about your health, speak to your doctor.
Information for Border Staff

What is a coronavirus and COVID-19?

Coronaviruses can make humans and animals sick. Some coronaviruses can cause illnesses similar to the common cold while others cause more serious diseases, including Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS).

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Symptoms include (but are not limited to) fever, cough, sore throat, fatigue and shortness of breath or difficulty breathing. Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing is a sign of possible pneumonia that requires prompt medical attention.

It can take up to 14 days for symptoms to show after a person has been infected. This means that passengers may arrive in Australia feeling well, however, symptoms may appear days later.

What is Australia doing?

To capture ill travellers who may have been exposed to COVID-19, the Department of Health has included additional questions on the Traveller with Illness Checklist (TIC) for biosecurity officers to administer. The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment is in contact with airlines and international vessels to ensure compliance with pre-arrival reporting requirements of ill travellers.

The Department of Health is also providing additional communication material for travellers at all international ports. This material informs travellers of the symptoms of COVID-19 and encourages them to report to biosecurity officers if they are experiencing symptoms while in the port environment.

Australia will deny entry to anyone who has left or transited through mainland China in the previous 14 days, left or transited Iran on or after 1 March 2020, or the Republic of Korea on or after 5 March 2020, or Italy on or after 11 March 2020. Exceptions include Australian citizens, permanent residents (and their immediate family), and airline crew who have used appropriate personal protective equipment.

All travellers arriving in Australia from mainland China, Iran, Republic of Korea or Italy are required to undergo additional health screening by biosecurity officers or state and territory health workers at the port. Travellers from mainland China, Iran, Republic of Korea or Italy are required to isolate themselves if they:

- have left or transited through mainland China or Iran in the last 14 days;
- have left or transited through the Republic of Korea on or after 5 March 2020; or
- have left or transited through Italy on or after 11 March 2020; or
- have been in close contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus.

The Australian Department of Health is closely monitoring this situation in collaboration with the WHO and the states and territories, and will keep border agencies informed.

Border workers should continue to follow existing processes for screening ill travellers arriving at our international air and sea ports using the updated TIC.
This includes identification of ill travellers, isolation and referral to human biosecurity officers where indicated.

How does COVID-19 spread?

COVID-19 is most likely to spread from person to person through:

- direct contact with a person whilst they are infectious
- contact with droplets when a person with a confirmed infection coughs or sneezes, or
- touching objects or surfaces that are contaminated from a cough or sneeze from a person with a confirmed infection, and then touching your mouth or face.

Close contacts¹ (such as people staying in the same house or sharing a closed space for a prolonged length of time) are most at risk of infection. However, there is emerging evidence which suggests in some infected persons the virus may be spread the day before symptoms develop.

Risk of infection to border workers from someone who has COVID-19 but is not yet displaying symptoms is still considered low.

How can I reduce my risk? When should I wear full PPE?

As COVID-19 most likely spreads through direct contact with droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes, casual contact with travellers who are not showing symptoms is not considered a high risk for infection.

If interviewing an ill traveller or ill crew you should wear a surgical mask, full length disposable gown, gloves and eye protection in accordance with your workplace guidance.

PPE must be used appropriately to be effective. If you are required to wear PPE, you should be trained in the correct way to put on, remove and dispose of all PPE. If you are unsure of the process, talk to your supervisor about appropriate guidance.

All used PPE should be placed in a lined bin and disposed of with other waste in the arrivals area of an international port.

The following measures will also help reduce the risk further:

- Practise and promote frequent handwashing throughout your shift. When hand washing facilities are not readily available, alcohol-based hand rub is recommended. Use according to instructions or receive advice from your supervisor.
  - If you are regularly handling documents from travellers, it is good practice to use hand sanitiser regularly and avoid touching your face unless your hands are clean.
- Where possible, stay 1 metre or more away from travellers who are ill.
- Practise and promote good respiratory (cough) etiquette.
- Undertake appropriate cleaning and disinfection activities.
- Use PPE if close contact with an ill traveller is required.

¹ A close contact is someone who has spent more than 15 minutes face-to-face or more than two hours in a closed room with an infected person.
The risk to border staff working at the primary line and biosecurity inspection areas is considered low. The risk to border staff working in the cargo and mail processing areas and other areas of air and sea ports is considered extremely low.

PPE in the form of gloves, gowns, eye protection or face shields is not considered necessary when performing these roles. However, frequent handwashing (including the proper use of alcohol-based sanitisers) and cough etiquette should still be practised in this setting. If a border officer elects to wear disposable gloves, or other PPE items supplied by their agency, regular hand hygiene is still required and care must be taken to avoid breaching the glove material.

What should I do if I develop symptoms?

There is no need for alarm, however, the COVID-19 outbreak is a concern. If you develop symptoms, call a doctor and describe your profession as a border worker with possible contact with travellers from risk areas. If you are coughing, ask for a medical mask to wear while you are at the doctor.

You should also:
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, before and after eating, and after going to the toilet.
- Cover your cough and sneeze, dispose of tissues, and use alcohol-based hand rub.
- If unwell, avoid contact with others (stay more than 1.5 metres from people).

Will I be contacted if I have been exposed to someone with COVID-19?

When someone is diagnosed with COVID-19 in Australia, health authorities conduct contact tracing. Contract tracing is when public health staff contact people who had close contact with the unwell person during their contagious period. You will be notified by staff if you have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 and you will be given information and advice relevant to your exposure.

Other information

While COVID-19 is of concern and we remain vigilant, it is currently influenza season in the northern hemisphere. It is more likely that travellers displaying infectious symptoms have a common respiratory infection, rather than COVID-19.

Where can I get more information about COVID-19?

For the latest advice, information and resources, go to www.health.gov.au.

Call the National Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The phone number of your state or territory public health agency is available at www.health.gov.au/state-territory-contacts.

If you have concerns about your health, speak to your doctor.

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2 Close contact is when a person has spent more than 15 minutes face-to-face or more than two hours in a closed room with an infected person.
Information for cargo and mail workers

This information sheet should be read in conjunction with the ‘What you need to know’ and ‘Isolation guidance’ information sheets at www.health.gov.au/covid19-resources

How does the virus spread?

The coronavirus is most likely spread from person to person through:

- direct contact with a person while they are infectious
- contact with droplets when a person with a confirmed infection coughs or sneezes
- touching objects or surfaces that are contaminated by droplets coughed or sneezed from a person with a confirmed infection, and then touching your mouth or face

NOTE: This is not considered an increased risk to cargo and mail workers as on most dry surfaces, coronaviruses die within a few hours as secretions dry out.

Close contacts¹ (such as people staying in the same house or sharing a closed space for a prolonged length of time with someone who is infected) are most at risk of infection.

The World Health Organization has advised it is safe to receive international letters or packages as, from previous analysis, coronaviruses do not survive long on objects, such as mailed items².

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms may include fever, cough, sore throat, fatigue and shortness of breath. Shortness of breath is a sign of possible pneumonia that requires prompt medical attention.

What actions are recommended?

The risk of coronavirus infection from handling goods is considered extremely low.

Practising good hand and sneeze/cough hygiene is the best defence against most viruses. Staff handling cargo and mail should:

- wash your hands frequently with soap and water, before and after eating, and after going to the toilet
- cover your cough and sneeze, dispose of tissues, and use alcohol-based hand sanitiser
- if unwell, avoid contact with others (stay more than 1.5 metres from people).

More information

While coronavirus is of concern, it is important to remember that most people displaying symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat or tiredness are likely suffering with a cold or other respiratory illness—not coronavirus.

For the latest advice, information and resources, go to www.health.gov.au

Call the National Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you require translating or interpreting services, call 131 450.

The phone number of each state or territory public health agency is available at www.health.gov.au/state-territory-contacts

If you have concerns about your health, speak to a doctor.

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¹ A close contact is someone who has spent more than 15 minutes face-to-face, or more than two hours in a closed room, with an infected person.

What you need to know

We need to work together to help stop the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

To protect people most at risk and slow the rate of community transmission:
- Non-essential organised outdoor gatherings should be kept to fewer than 500 people
- Non-essential organised indoor gatherings should be kept to fewer than 100 people – this does not apply to schools or public transport
- Non-essential meetings or conferences of health care professionals and emergency services should be limited
- Reconsider if you need to visit residential aged care facilities and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Further information for residents of residential aged care services, their family members and visitors can be found at [www.health.gov.au/covid19-resources](http://www.health.gov.au/covid19-resources).
- From midnight Sunday 15 March 2020, all travellers coming into Australia will be required to self-isolate for 14 days.

These precautions are most important for people over 60 and those with chronic disease.

People who have returned from anywhere overseas are required to self-isolate for 14 days. During this time, you should monitor your health closely. If you develop symptoms including a fever and cough, you should seek medical attention, remembering to call ahead.

People who have been in close contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus should also monitor their health and seek medical advice.

While coronavirus is of concern, it is important to remember that most people displaying symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat or tiredness are likely suffering with a cold or other respiratory illness – not coronavirus.

What is a coronavirus and COVID-19?
Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses known to cause respiratory infections. These can range from the common cold to more serious diseases such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). This new coronavirus originated in Hubei Province, China and the disease is named COVID-19.

How is this coronavirus spread?
Coronavirus is most likely to spread from person-to-person through:
- Direct close contact with a person while they are infectious or in the 24 hours before their symptoms appeared.
- Close contact with a person with a confirmed infection who coughs or sneezes.
- Touching objects or surfaces (such as door handles or tables) contaminated from a cough or sneeze from a person with a confirmed infection, and then touching your mouth or face.
How can we help prevent the spread of coronavirus?

Practising good hand and sneeze/cough hygiene and keeping your distance from others when you are sick is the best defence against most viruses. You should:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, before and after eating, and after going to the toilet.
- Cover your cough and sneeze, dispose of tissues, and wash your hands.
- If unwell, avoid contact with others (stay more than 1.5 metres from people).
- Exercise personal responsibility for social distancing measures.

What is social distancing?

Social distancing is one way to help slow the spread of viruses such as COVID-19. Social distancing includes staying at home when you are unwell and keeping a distance of 1.5 metres between you and other people whenever possible. It is important to minimise physical contact especially with people at higher risk of developing serious symptoms, such as older people and people with existing health conditions.

Government restrictions apply for organised outdoor gatherings of more than 500 people and indoor gatherings of more than 100 people that are not essential.

There’s no need to change your daily routine, but taking these social distancing precautions can help protect the people in our community who are most at risk.

Who needs to isolate?

All people who arrive in Australia from midnight 15 March 2020, or think may they have been in close contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus, are required to self-isolate for 14 days.

What does isolate in your home mean?

If you have been diagnosed with COVID-19, you must stay at home to prevent it spreading to other people. You might also be asked to stay at home if you may have been exposed to the virus.

Staying at home means you:

- do not go to public places such as work, school, shopping centres, childcare or university
- ask someone to get food and other necessities for you and leave them at your front door
- do not let visitors in — only people who usually live with you should be in your home

You do not need to wear a mask in your home. If you need to go out to seek medical attention, wear a surgical mask (if you have one) to protect others.

For more information, visit www.health.gov.au/covid19-resources

What do I do if I develop symptoms?

If you develop symptoms (fever, a cough, sore throat, tiredness or shortness of breath) within 14 days of arriving in Australia, or within 14 days of last contact of a confirmed case, you should arrange to see your doctor for urgent assessment.

You should telephone the health clinic or hospital before you arrive and tell them your travel history or that you may have been in contact with a potential case of coronavirus.
You must remain isolated either in your home, hotel or a health care setting until public health authorities inform you it is safe for you to return to your usual activities.

**Who is most at risk of a serious illness?**

Some people who are infected may not get sick at all, some will get mild symptoms from which they will recover easily, and others may become very ill, very quickly. From previous experience with other coronaviruses, the people at most risk of serious infection are:

- people with compromised immune systems (e.g. cancer)
- elderly people
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as they have higher rates of chronic illness
- people with diagnosed chronic medical conditions
- very young children and babies*
- people in group residential settings
- people in detention facilities.

*At this stage the risk to children and babies, and the role children play in the transmission of COVID-19, is not clear. However, there has so far been a low rate of confirmed COVID-19 cases among children, relative to the broader population.

**How is the virus treated?**

There is no specific treatment for coronaviruses. Antibiotics are not effective against viruses. Most of the symptoms can be treated with supportive medical care.

**Should I wear a face mask?**

You do not need to wear a mask if you are healthy. While the use of masks can help to prevent transmission of disease from infected patients to others, masks are not currently recommended for use by healthy members of the public for the prevention of infections like coronavirus.

**More information**

For the latest advice, information and resources, go to [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)

Call the National Coronavirus Help Line on 1800 020 080. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you require translating or interpreting services, call 131 450.

The phone number of your state or territory public health agency is available at [www.health.gov.au/state-territory-contacts](http://www.health.gov.au/state-territory-contacts)

If you have concerns about your health, speak to your doctor.