



Information on work attendance and testing for health and residential aged care workers

Are there any restrictions on health and residential aged care workers attending work?

Health and residential aged care workers with direct contact with patients are more likely to be exposed to COVID-19. Early detection of COVID-19 in health care workers is important to protect the vulnerable patients they treat in clinical practice.

Health care workers should not go to work if they have:

- symptoms of an influenza like illness, as per usual practice; OR
- returned from any country overseas and have fever OR symptoms of acute respiratory infection (e.g. shortness of breath, cough, sore throat). These health care workers should be isolated and tested for COVID-19; OR
- have been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 (either in the community or at work) within the past 14 days and have not been protected with appropriate PPE; or
- returned from a higher risk country within the past 14 days. Go to www.health.gov.au/covid19-travellers for the list of at-risk countries and quarantine requirements.

There is no work restriction on health care workers who are casual contacts of COVID-19 cases and are well, including those who have provided direct care for confirmed cases while using adequate personal protective equipment (PPE). In this instance, health care workers should self-monitor for symptoms and self-isolate if they become unwell until COVID-19 is excluded.

In settings where the temporary exclusion of health care staff will have a significant impact on a service, an individual risk assessment should be conducted in collaboration with the local Public Health Unit.

When should health and residential aged care workers be tested?

Early detection of COVID-19 in health care workers is an important protective mechanism for the higher risk population that may come in contact with them.

Health care workers should have a lower threshold for testing for COVID-19 if they provide direct care and therefore be tested if they have:

- a fever (≥ 37.5); AND
- symptoms of an acute respiratory infection (e.g. shortness of breath, cough, sore throat).

This is in addition to the standard requirements for testing health care workers as returned travellers, outlined below.

What should health and residential aged care workers do if they have travelled overseas or been in close contact with a confirmed case?

Health care workers who are in quarantine 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.

For more information on self-isolation, see the 'Isolation guidance' information sheets at www.health.gov.au/covid19-resources

If you develop symptoms of fever OR acute respiratory infection (e.g. shortness of breath, cough, and/or sore throat) you should isolate yourself immediately and urgently seek 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

How can we help prevent the spread of COVID-19?

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 COVID-19 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 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. 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.