



# COVID-19 Clinics

## Frequently asked questions Current at 30 April 2020

### **What are the symptoms of COVID-19?**

Symptoms include shortness of breath or cough, with or without a fever. In some cases, the virus can cause severe pneumonia. From what we know now about COVID-19, the symptoms can start between 2 and 14 days from exposure to the virus.

### **Should I be tested if I don't have symptoms?**

No. There is no reason to be tested for COVID-19 if you do not have symptoms.

### **Why won't I get tested if I don't have symptoms?**

In the early stages of infection (before people have symptoms), it may not be possible to detect the virus. Testing when you do not have symptoms could give a false negative result.

### **Who can be tested?**

Any person will be considered for testing if they meet the following criteria and another diagnosis is not more likely:

- presenting with a fever ( $\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) OR
- a recent history of a fever (e.g. night sweats, chills) OR
- an acute respiratory infection e.g. shortness of breath, cough, sore throat.

### **I have just had my COVID-19 test. What should I do now?**

People who have been tested for COVID-19 must self-isolate until their test results are available. After your test you must return immediately home (or other suitable accommodation) and self-isolate until you get your results.

### **What does self-isolation mean?**

Self-isolation means you must not leave your accommodation. You must not go to the shops, walk the dog or undertake exercise in a public or communal place.

If you are at home, only people who usually live in your household should be with you. You should minimise close contact with them by avoiding situations where you have face-to-face contact closer than 1.5 metres. You should stay in an area of the home away from others (preferably with your own bathroom, living and sleeping area) to protect other household members. You should not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, pillows or other items with other people in your home. After using these items, you should wash them thoroughly with soap/detergent and warm water or place them in the dishwasher for cleaning.

If you are in a hotel you must stay in your room and must not use any of the hotel facilities. If your accommodation has a private garden or private balcony you may use these areas.

During your period of self-isolation, you should not allow any visitors into your home, hotel room or other accommodation.

For more information please see [COVID-19 Self-isolation for close contacts and returned travellers](#)

## **When will I be notified of my test results?**

It will take between 2 and 3 days to be notified of your test results.

## **What should I do if I feel worse while I am waiting for my test results?**

For medical assistance contact your General Practitioner (GP). If your GP is not able to assist, contact an after-hours [GP telehealth service](#) –If you require urgent medical assistance (e.g. difficulty breathing) call 000 and let them know you have been in self-isolation awaiting test results for COVID-19.

Do not attend the Emergency Department to find out your test results.

## **What happens if I get a positive test result for COVID-19?**

A Public Health Unit staff member will discuss your positive result with you. You will need to remain in self-isolation until the Public Health Unit has confirmed you are no longer contagious. You may be asked to spend time in hospital while you recover.

## **What happens if I get a negative test result for COVID-19?**

If you provided an Australian mobile phone number at the COVID clinic where you were tested, your negative test result will be provided to you by text message (SMS). COVID clinics will contact the parents/guardians/carers of children under the age of 16 who were tested at COVID clinics to provide negative test results.

## **If my test is negative do I need to remain in self-isolation?**

If your test results are negative and symptoms have resolved, you can return to normal activities UNLESS you were already in self-isolation because you are a close contact or returned traveller. In these cases, you will still need to complete your original 14 days of self-isolation.

If your results are negative but you are still unwell, you should remain at home until your symptoms have resolved. All respiratory infections are contagious, and it is important people do not attend work or school until they have recovered from their acute illness. This is particularly important for people who work with high-risk groups such as health care workers, aged care/residential care workers, disability support officers or police officers.

## **Can COVID-19 be transmitted from person to person?**

Yes, COVID-19 can be spread from person to person. The virus is most likely to spread from person-to-person through:

- direct close contact with a person while they are infectious
- close contact with a person with a confirmed infection who coughs or sneezes, or
- 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.

Most infections are only transmitted by people when they have symptoms. Spread of this virus from person to person is usually between close contacts.

## **What is the treatment for COVID-19?**

There is no specific treatment for COVID-19 but the symptoms can be treated. In most cases, symptoms will resolve on their own.

## **Is there a vaccine?**

There are currently no available vaccines for COVID-19.

## **How can I protect myself and my family?**

The best way to protect yourself and others is to practise good hygiene by:

- frequently washing your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, or using an alcohol-based hand gel
- covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue or flexed elbow
- avoiding close contact with anyone who has a cold or flu-like symptoms.

## **I am caring for someone who has (or could have) COVID-19; how can I protect myself?**

Anyone in the home with a respiratory illness should be cared for in a single room, where practicable. Isolating sick people in single rooms reduces the risk of transmission to others. Follow the below steps to reduce chances of spreading infections at home:

- frequently wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand gel
- cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue or flexed elbow
- avoid close contact with anyone who has a cold or flu-like symptoms.

If it is not possible to keep the potentially infected person in a room by themselves, try to follow these principles to reduce chances of disease spread:

- as a priority, place people with excessive cough and phlegm in single rooms
- if there is more than one person with the same symptoms, they can be placed together in the same room
- importantly, ensure that people sharing a room are physically separated (more than 1.5 metre or arm's length) from each other.

## **Do I need to wear a mask?**

Surgical masks are helpful in preventing people who have COVID-19 from spreading it to others. If you are well, you do not need to wear a surgical mask.

If you are required to self-isolate, you should use a surgical mask (if you have one) in the following circumstances:

- if you need to leave your home for any reason (e.g. to visit a medical facility)
- if you have symptoms and you cannot avoid being in the same room as other people

## **Where can I find more information?**

Further information about COVID-19 and self-isolation is available on the Department of Health's websites: [www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/coronavirus](http://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/coronavirus)

If you need help with translating the information on these sites, contact the Translating and Interpreting Service (external site) or phone 131 450.

**Last updated 1 May 2020 by PHEOC Comms**

**This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with disability.**

© Department of Health 2020

Copyright to this material is vested in the State of Western Australia unless otherwise indicated. Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the provisions of the *Copyright Act 1968*, no part may be reproduced or re-used for any purposes whatsoever without written permission of the State of Western Australia.