



RACGP

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners

*Managing mild
COVID-19 at home
with assistance from
your GP*

**A guide, action plan and
symptom diary for patients**



Managing mild COVID-19 at home with assistance from your GP: A guide, action plan and symptom diary for patients

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The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners Ltd
100 Wellington Parade
East Melbourne, Victoria 3002

Tel 03 8699 0414
Fax 03 8699 0400
www.racgp.org.au

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We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands and seas on which we work and live, and pay our respects to Elders, past, present and future.

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Introduction

If you've had a test for COVID-19 (coronavirus) and the result is positive, indicating that you have COVID-19, you must follow the directions given to you by your local public health unit or doctor. If your symptoms are mild, you may be advised that it is safe for you to manage your symptoms at home, instead of going to hospital.

This guide provides advice on how to manage a mild case of COVID-19 at home, if you have been advised to do so by your GP, another doctor or your local public health unit.

At the end of this guide, you'll find appendices of [My COVID-19 action plan](#) and [My daily symptom diary](#). The action plan should be filled out after a discussion with your GP, and should be kept somewhere easy to find. If you need to consult any healthcare professional or call for an ambulance, show them the plan.

Fill out the symptom checklist every day while you are unwell, or for as long as advised by your general practitioner (GP). This will help you keep a check on how you're feeling, and will also help your GP track your symptoms and determine whether your management plan needs changing.

Managing symptoms

Most people with COVID-19 will only experience mild symptoms. The most commonly reported symptoms include:¹

- fever
- respiratory symptoms
 - coughing
 - sore throat
 - shortness of breath.

Other symptoms of mild illness associated with COVID-19 can include:¹

- runny nose
- headache
- muscle or joint pains
- nausea
- diarrhoea
- vomiting
- loss of sense of smell
- altered sense of taste
- loss of appetite
- fatigue.

If you develop any of the following symptoms, **call emergency services on 000 immediately** and tell the phone operator that you have been diagnosed with COVID-19. These symptoms could indicate more severe or serious illness that should be treated in a hospital:²

- Severe shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Blue lips or face
- Pain or pressure in the chest
- Cold and clammy or pale and mottled skin
- Confusion
- Fainting
- Difficulty waking up
- Passing no urine or a lot less urine than usual
- Coughing up blood

Record your symptoms using the [My daily symptom diary](#) and discuss these with your GP during your consultations.

Try to get plenty of rest, drink lots of fluids and eat well.

Your GP can advise you of any medicines that may be appropriate to manage your symptoms.

Isolating at home

Anyone diagnosed with COVID-19 must **isolate** to prevent the spread of infection. Isolation involves:

- **Staying at home, unless you need to leave to get medical care.** If you're isolating, do not attend work or school, visit public areas, or travel on public transport or in taxis or ride-share services. You must always call ahead before attending a healthcare service, and you must advise the healthcare service that you have COVID-19. In many cases you will be able to receive medical care using telehealth (using a phone or video), and medicines can be arranged by your pharmacist or GP to be delivered to your home.
- **Living in a separate room away from other people in your household, if possible.** If you can stay in a separate, well-ventilated room away from the other people in your household, you should do so. Use a separate bathroom that others do not use if you can. If you cannot isolate in a separate room, avoid shared spaces in the house as much as possible and wear a mask when moving through shared areas.
- **Ensuring others do not enter your home, unless they are providing necessary medical or personal care.** The people who usually live in your house with you can continue to stay in the house with you. However, they are considered to be close contacts and are also required to isolate (refer to '[Advice for caregivers and other people in the household](#)'). Do not allow other people to enter your home, unless they are providing essential medical or personal care.
- **Having groceries and other essential items delivered to your home.** As all household members will be in isolation, it is important to arrange delivery of groceries and other essential items. Supermarkets have increased their capacity for home deliveries during this time. If you are having difficulty, consider phoning friends or neighbours who may be able to drop essential items to your door.

Your GP or local public health unit will advise you when isolation is no longer required and you can return to your community, adhering to any restrictions currently in place in your local area.

Stopping the spread of the virus

COVID-19 spreads between people who are in close contact through respiratory droplets that are created when an infected person talks, coughs or sneezes. To help protect other people in your household, you should do the following:

- **Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly.** Practise good hand hygiene by washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser if soap and water are not available, and your hands are not visibly dirty. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- **Wear a face mask.** You should wear a mask whenever you are in contact with other people. Do not touch the mask while you are wearing it. When the mask gets wet or dirty, replace it immediately with a clean, dry mask. Other people in the household or people providing care to you should wear a mask that covers their mouth and nose when they are in the room with you.
- **Do not share personal items.** You should use separate dishes, cups, cutlery, towels, bedding and other items from the ones used by others in the household. After use, wash all these items on the hottest possible setting.
- **Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.** Each day, you or a caregiver should clean and disinfect any surfaces that you touch frequently, such as doorknobs, light switches, handles, toilets, taps and sinks. Wipe down surfaces with both a detergent and a disinfectant. Use a cleaning detergent followed by a disinfectant, or use a 2-in-1 product with both cleaning and disinfecting properties. If a carer or another person in the household is cleaning for a person who has COVID-19, they should wear a mask and gloves while doing so.³
- **Reduce clutter.** To make cleaning as easy as possible, consider reducing clutter in the room in which you're staying.
- **Practise good cough and sneeze hygiene.** Everyone in the household should cough or sneeze into their elbow or cover their mouth and nose with a tissue. Wash your hands after discarding the tissue.

Taking care of your mental health

Being in isolation can be stressful and create anxiety. The following are some ways to look after your mental health over this time.

- **Keep in touch with friends and family.** Maintain contact with loved ones via telephone, email and social media, or by using video technologies like WhatsApp and Zoom.
- **Develop or maintain a daily routine.** This could include showering and getting dressed each day, having regular mealtimes, and exercising (within your home or garden).
- **Learn more about COVID-19 from trustworthy and credible sources.** Understanding more about the virus might help you feel less anxious.
- **Use the time to do new things.** Time in isolation can provide an opportunity to try activities like crafting, drawing or reading.
- **Spend time outdoors.** If you have a private courtyard, balcony or garden, spend some time there each day to get some fresh air.

Speak to your GP if your mental health worsens or you have any concerns. Your GP is there to support your physical and mental health.

Advice for caregivers and other people in the household

Current evidence suggests that a person with COVID-19 can infect others from 48 hours (two days) **before** they develop any symptoms, and they are considered infectious until they meet the criteria for release from isolation.⁴

Anyone who has had close contact with a person with COVID-19 should monitor their own health and get tested if they develop any of the symptoms described at the beginning of this guide.

Caregivers and other people in the household who've had close contact with a person with COVID-19 need to remain in [quarantine](#) for 14 days after their last close contact with that person.⁵ The requirements for quarantine are the same as for isolation. However, if at the end of the 14-day period you have not developed any symptoms, your quarantine period ends and you can return to your community, adhering to any restrictions currently in place in your local area.

Household contacts who are not providing care may choose to move to another location to complete their quarantine. This may allow them release from quarantine at an earlier date than if they choose to stay.

Caregivers and others in the household should review the above information on helping to stop the spread of the virus.

Resources

- [Isolation for coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) provides advice about isolation, steps to take while in isolation, and advice on living in the same house as someone in isolation.
- [Quarantine for coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) provides advices for patients who are well but have been in contact with someone with COVID-19.
- [Getting your home COVID-19 ready](#) provides practical tips for setting up your home if you or a household member need to self-isolate.
- [Head to Health](#) provides links to trusted Australian mental health online and phone supports, resources and treatment options. This useful website also has online programs and forums, as well as a range of digital information resources.
- [Beyond Blue Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service](#) provides information, advice and strategies to help people manage their wellbeing and mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- [Local state and territory health departments](#) – contact details.

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Appendix A. My COVID-19 action plan

Keep this action plan somewhere easy to find.

Fill out the symptom checklist every day while you are unwell, or as long as advised by your GP. It will help you keep a check on how you're feeling, and will also help your GP track your symptoms and determine whether your management plan needs changing.

If you need to consult any healthcare professional or call for an ambulance, show them this plan.

Name:	
Age:	Date of birth:
Relevant medical history:	
Current medications:	
Allergies:	
Date of onset of symptoms:	
Date of test confirming COVID-19 positive status:	
Next of kin:	
Relationship:	Phone number:
Contact details:	

Appendix B. My medicines management

I have been prescribed the medicines below by my GP (or other health professional) to manage my symptoms:

Appendix C. Managing my symptoms

If I have **mild symptoms** such as:

- aches and pains
- sore throat
- dry cough
- runny nose

I will manage these symptoms by:

- getting enough rest
- staying active (staying within my house and/or garden)
- eating well
- maintaining a good fluid intake
- taking any medicines discussed with my GP (or other health provider).

I will continue to monitor and document my symptoms in the daily symptom diary.

If I get any **moderate symptoms**, such as:

- symptom diary looking like it is tracking worse, rather than stable or better
- temperature above 38 degrees
- vomiting or diarrhoea
- mild breathlessness or a persistent cough
- struggling to get out of bed and feeling abnormally tired and weak

I will contact my GP for review as soon as possible.

I will continue to monitor and document my symptoms in the daily symptom diary.

If I get any **severe symptoms**, such as:

- severe shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- lips or face turning blue
- pain or pressure in my chest
- skin cold and clammy, or pale and mottled
- confusion (eg I can't recall the day, time or names)
- fainting
- finding it difficult to keep my eyes open
- little or no urine output
- coughing up blood

I will call 000 immediately and let them know that I have COVID-19.



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