

COVID-19

COVID-19 is a disease caused by infection with a coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2. Common symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat and shortness of breath. Other symptoms include fatigue, loss of taste or smell, and congestion or runny nose. COVID-19 is usually milder in children than in adults.

How it spreads

COVID-19 spreads by droplets in the air that contain the virus or direct contact with mucus or saliva. People get infected by:

- breathing in droplets when an infected person breathes, coughs or sneezes on them
- touching a surface contaminated with droplets – for example, hands, tissues, toys or eating utensils – and then touching their mouth.

Vaccination and boosters against COVID-19 are available to everyone through the Australian National Immunisation Program.

Exclusion period

Refer to state or territory advice.

If a person has respiratory symptoms (cough, sneezing, runny or blocked nose, sore throat), exclude them only if:

- the respiratory symptoms are severe, **or**
- the respiratory symptoms are getting worse (more frequent or severe), **or**
- they also have concerning symptoms (fever, rash, tiredness, pain, poor feeding).

Otherwise do not exclude.

A person often has an ongoing cough after they have recovered from a respiratory infection. If their other symptoms have gone and they feel well, they can return to the service.

Risks in pregnancy

If you are pregnant, there is a higher risk of complications for yourself and your baby if you catch COVID-19. There is a very rare risk of premature birth, mainly in unvaccinated women. Staying up to date with vaccinations, washing hands regularly and wearing masks can help reduce your risk of getting COVID-19. Read more at pregnancybirthbaby.org.au/coronavirus-covid-19-and-pregnancy.

Actions for educators and other staff

Encourage good respiratory and hand hygiene for all staff and children. Encourage COVID-19 vaccination for eligible people.

Check with your state or territory health department for local advice on managing COVID-19 infections.

Actions for parents and carers

If your child is eligible, the best way to protect them against COVID-19 is to get them vaccinated.

Most children who get COVID-19 have a mild infection that is like a common cold. Keep your child at home until their symptoms have gone and they feel well. If your child still has a cough, but their other symptoms have gone and they feel well, they can return to the service.

Teach them to cough and sneeze into a tissue, then throw the tissue into a bin and wash their hands.

Check with your state or territory health department for local advice on what to do when your child has COVID-19.

More information about COVID-19

See healthdirect for more information on prevention, diagnosis and treatment of COVID-19 (healthdirect.gov.au/covid-19).

To find out if a child needs medical help:

- use the online symptom checker (healthdirect.gov.au/symptom-checker)
- speak to a registered nurse by calling the 24-hour health advice hotline on 1800 022 222.