

What should I do if I test positive for COVID-19?

The information below contains some general guidelines. It is important to ensure that you follow the instructions given to you by your medical practitioner, the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) and your employer. Should any of these parties' instructions contradict any of the information in this document, the instructions of your medical practitioner, the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) and your employer should take preference.



Remember

You have to contact your employer to report your situation, to let them know that you cannot come to work and that you have tested positive for COVID-19.

Who will be in touch with me from the government or the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD)?

Your healthcare provider (your GP or local clinic) is primarily responsible for your care. However, you may be called, visited at home or advised by government officials, community health workers or by the NICD.

Once you have confirmed coronavirus disease, the purpose of this contact is to assess if your home environment is suitable for isolation, to assist you and members of your household to adhere to the home isolation recommendations, and to monitor your illness.

If you are visited at home, officials will wear personal protective equipment such as masks, gloves and aprons to prevent themselves from becoming infected. They will maintain a distance of two meters and will not enter your home, unless necessary.

Visiting officials may provide a care pack to you (the contents of this pack will vary).

The number of times you are contacted by government officials or the NICD is subject to change. Your health care provider, government officials or NICD will also ask you to make a list of all the people you have had close contact with from two days before you became ill. These people will also be required to self-quarantine at home for 14 days and monitor themselves for symptoms. Ensure that the list that you compile is comprehensive, accurate and complete.

If I have a positive laboratory test result, am I at risk for more severe illness?

The laboratory test will not be able to tell you if you are at risk for more severe illness because the result is only reported as positive or negative for COVID-19.

However, you would have been assessed by your healthcare provider in terms of your current coronavirus illness and your other risk factors for more severe illness (i.e. older age, other underlying medical conditions, etc.).

If you were asked to isolate at home it means that your healthcare provider has assessed that you have a mild illness that can be managed at home, that you have no/few risk factors for severe illness, and that your home environment is suitable for isolation.

However, some people with coronavirus disease may worsen at home and need admission to hospital. It is very important that you carefully monitor your symptoms throughout your illness and look out for warning signs.

How do I care for myself at home?

Most people who get sick with coronavirus disease may only feel mildly ill and should recover at home. You may continue to experience the typical symptoms which include a fever, cough and mild shortness of breath. Most people with mild illness will start feeling better within a week of experiencing the first symptoms. Keep your healthcare provider's contact information on hand for emergencies – this could be your GP or your nearest local clinic/hospital.

Get rest at home and drink enough water and/or clear fluids during the day to make sure that your urine stays a pale clear colour.

There are no specific antiviral treatments recommended for coronavirus disease. You can take over-the-counter medications if you have fever or pain. Use these according to the instructions on the packet or label and do not exceed the recommended dose. You should continue taking any other prescribed chronic medication. Always follow the treatment instructions of your healthcare provider and contact them if you need any advice or have any questions.

Monitor your symptoms carefully. If your symptoms get worse, call your healthcare provider immediately.

If you develop any emergency warning signs, get medical attention immediately.

Emergency warning signs include:

- Trouble breathing
- Chest pain or pressure in your chest that does not go away
- Coughing up blood
- Becoming confused
- Severe sleepiness
- Blue lips or face.

If you experience any of these warning signs, you or a member of your household should call your nearest hospital or emergency services immediately and notify them that you have confirmed coronavirus disease.

Avoid taking public transport to the facility – either use private transport (preferably with windows rolled-down) or call emergency services for an ambulance if required.

You should wear a face mask if you travel to seek hospital care.

What does home quarantine mean?

Stay at home. Do not go to work, school, or any public areas.

Do not use any public transport (including buses, minibus taxis and taxi cabs). Do not travel. You should cancel all your routine medical and dental appointments.

If possible, you should not even go out to buy food, medicines or other essentials. You should ask friends or relatives to help you to buy groceries and essentials. If you have access to the internet, you can order your shopping or medications online, but tell delivery drivers to leave any items for collection outside your house. Delivery drivers should not come into your house at all.

You should not go outside to exercise, unless you can maintain a safe distance from others in an outdoor space.

You should not have any visitors in your home during your quarantine period. Do keep in touch with your relatives, friends and colleagues over the phone, internet or by using social media.

If you live with other people, as far as possible, you should stay in a separate room and away from other people in your household. If a separate room is not possible, try to keep to one area of your home, at least 2 meters (3 steps) away from other people. You, and the other people in your house, should use all the COVID-19 prevention techniques described in this course.

If your symptoms have cleared after a 14-day home isolation period, you are considered to no longer be infectious, i.e. you are very unlikely to transmit infection to others. No routine and/or automatic follow-up laboratory tests will be done during, or at the end of your home isolation period if you do not experience any symptoms. But please contact your medical practitioner and employer for specific instructions in this regard.