



Australian Government

Department of Health

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND THE PEOPLE YOU ARE CARING FOR FROM INFECTION WITH COVID-19



Overview

This document covers the fundamentals of infection prevention and control (IPC) for COVID-19 including:

- COVID-19 – what is it?
- Signs and symptoms
- Keeping safe – protecting yourself and others
- Myth busting

Document Objectives

At the end of this document you should be able to:

- understand the basics about the COVID-19 virus, including how it is spread
- describe what you can do to protect yourself and others
- know what to do if you develop symptoms
- know what to do if the person you are caring for develops symptoms
- tell the difference between myths and facts about COVID-19.

COVID-19: Background

- Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that can make humans sick
- The new coronavirus disease, officially known as COVID-19, originated in China in 2019 and has since spread around the world
- Most people, around 80% who become infected with COVID-19, will experience only mild symptoms and fully recover without any special treatment
- Some people, around 15% of those who become infected with COVID-19, will experience moderate symptoms
- A small number of people who become infected with COVID-19, approximately 5%, may experience severe symptoms and get very sick
- It is important to know how to protect yourself, your family and your community



COVID-19 Signs and Symptoms

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are:

- **fever**
- flu-like symptoms such as **coughing, sore throat** and **fatigue**
- **shortness of breath.**
- Not everyone who has symptoms like these has COVID-19 as there are several other illnesses that can cause these symptoms



Image from Department of Health

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-resources-for-health-professionals-including-pathology-providers-and-healthcare-managers>

Higher Risk Populations

Some people at higher risk for developing serious illness from COVID-19 including:

- **older people**
- those with underlying medical problems including **high blood pressure, heart problems, diabetes, respiratory disease or immune deficiencies (low immunity).**
- experience higher rates of chronic diseases compared to other Australians and may be at higher risk of serious illness.



COVID-19; Who can catch it?

- Anybody can be infected
- COVID-19 does not discriminate between race nor gender therefore we are all at risk of infection
- We all need to be safe
- There are important things that we can do to protect ourselves, our family and those in our care

How does COVID-19 spread?

- COVID-19 spreads from person to person through droplet transmission
 - Droplets are small pieces of saliva, which are produced when a person coughs or sneezes
 - Droplets usually travel no further than one metre through the air
- You can become infected if:
 - you have close contact with an infected person who coughs or sneezes
 - you touch an object (e.g. door handle) contaminated from a cough or sneeze from a person with COVID-19 and touch your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Droplets cannot go through skin and can only lead to infection if they touch your mouth, nose or eyes

Stop the spread... We are all responsible, it's a group effort

- It is important that **everyone** helps to prevent the spread of COVID-19
- Encourage standard precautions amongst co-workers, family, friends, people you care for and any visitors
- Lead by example

Stop the spread

- The next sections will show you the basic measures you can take to take care of your own health and protect others
- This includes how you can decrease the risk of people in your care becoming infected with COVID-19
- Using the same principles you can also protect yourself and those in your care from other illnesses like influenza ('the flu')



Handwashing

- The most important thing you can do to protect yourself is to wash your hands regularly with soap and water or rubbing an alcohol-based sanitiser onto your hands
- This is important because washing your hands kills viruses that may be on your hands
- Watch these videos to see how you wash your hands and this video to show you how to use hand sanitiser
- Hand rub <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZnSjFr6J9HI>
- Hand wash <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3PmVJQUcm4E>

Handwash

How to Handwash?

WASH HANDS WHEN VISIBLY SOILED! OTHERWISE, USE HANDRUB

⌚ Duration of the entire procedure: 40-60 seconds





Handrub



Handwashing

- Make sure that people in your care also wash their hands regularly
- This is especially important after going to the toilet, blowing their nose and before and after eating
- If you work in a residential or health facility make sure that visitors wash their hands on entering and leaving the facility and before and after visiting any resident
- Put up signs to remind people and make sure there are handwashing stations or hand rub available for visitors to use



Try not to touch your face

- **Avoid touching your face** as much as possible
- This is important because virus containing droplets on your hands can be transferred to your eyes, mouth or nose where they can infect you
- Most of us touch our face many times per hour without realising
- Try to stop yourself touching your face, and encourage others to do the same

Social distancing

- Maintain at least **1.5 metres** distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing
- This is important because if you are too close to someone you might breathe in droplets they cough or sneeze
- If you are further away than 1.5 metres, it is very unlikely that you will breathe in droplets that might contain COVID-19
- Help those that you care for by keeping 1.5 metres between themselves and others
- This is especially important if you're out and about
- Avoid large public gatherings, unless essential
- Remember that COVID-19 can be transmitted by droplets that can be passed from hand to hand including handshakes
- Here are some videos on other ways to greet people
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aP2xcQKkzZI>

Australian government advice on social distancing is regularly being updated

- For the latest information see: <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>

Use good respiratory hygiene

- Make sure you and the people around you follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose when you cough and/or sneeze with:
 - a tissue that you put in the bin straight after use
 - your bent elbow
 - respiratory hygiene is important because droplets spread virus. By following good respiratory hygiene you 'catch' any droplets that might be produced, and this protects the people around you from viruses including COVID-19.
- Remind those in your care to use good respiratory hygiene
- Make sure that when you are out and about you carry tissues for yourself and others to use
- Remind those in your care to clean their hands after coughing or sneezing



Good respiratory etiquette



What about masks?

- Wearing a facemask in public **won't** help to protect you from infection
- Only wear a mask if you are sick with symptoms that might be due to COVID-19 (especially coughing) or looking after someone who may have COVID-19
- There is a shortage of masks and we need to save them for use when they are needed for sick people or for those looking after them
- Remember the best ways to protect yourself and others against COVID-19 are:
 - regularly wash your hands
 - use respiratory etiquette to catch your cough or sneeze with a tissue or in the bend of your elbow
 - maintain social distancing.

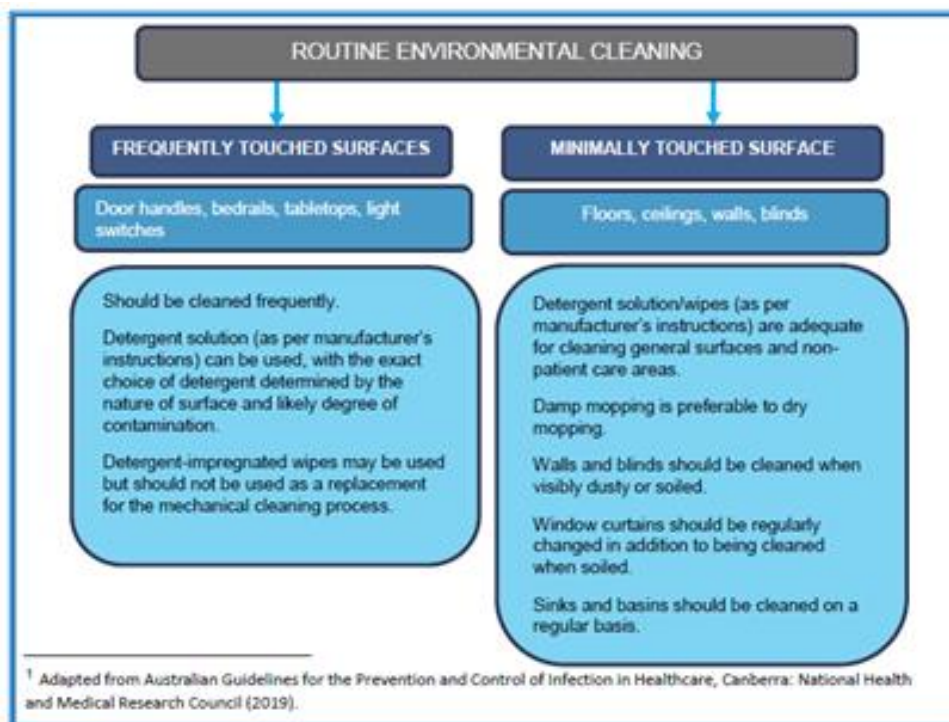


Cleaning and disinfection

- Regular cleaning of your environment, at home, in your car and at work is essential
- This is because droplets from an infected person can fall on a surface, and be transferred to someone else's hands if they touch the surface
- You should regularly clean frequently touched surfaces, for example, tables, doorknobs, light switches
- To clean use a detergent solution according to the manufacturer's label
- Remember to check the product label for any precautions you should take when using it, such as wearing gloves or making sure you have good ventilation

Cleaning in health and residential care settings

Routine environmental cleaning requirements can be divided into two groups:





Food safety

- From the information we know at present, COVID-19 doesn't seem to be spread by food
- However, you should still make sure you prepare food safely to make sure that you and others don't get sick from other diseases
- This is important when you are preparing food for yourself and for those in your care

Food safety and preparation

This includes:

- washing hands between handling raw and cooked foods
- cooking and proper handling of meat products
- using different chopping boards for raw meats and cooked foods
- ensuring all meats are cooked thoroughly.

When you are preparing food, you should always:

- practice good respiratory etiquette and if you have symptoms of a respiratory illness you should avoid preparing food for other people.

Safe food preparation





Managing visitors

- Keeping safe from COVID-19 does not mean having no social life for yourself or those in your care
- It is important to maintain relationships
- People who are unwell should be advised to stay in their **own homes** and **not visit others**
- This is particularly important to enforce in residential settings where people should stay in their own room
- Visitors to residential facilities should be encouraged to wash their hands on entering and exiting the facility and before and after visiting any resident
- You can reduce your risk of infection by asking visitors to your own home to do this

Taking people in your care out in public

- Regular hand hygiene, social distancing and respiratory etiquette are essential in public settings
- Practice hand hygiene after touching shared surfaces (e.g. in shops, cafes or on public transport)
- To maintain social distancing, you should **avoid large public gatherings**, unless essential

Protecting yourself and others in the workplace

- You can help keep yourself and others safe by **practising good infection and prevention and control** in your workplace
- You can use the same principles at work and at home:
 - Clean your hands regularly
 - Practice social distancing
 - Practice respiratory etiquette

Practical tips for protecting yourself and others in the workplace

- Put marks on the floor to ensure customers stand at least 1.5 metres away from the counter and from each other
- Practise hand hygiene between customers
- If you are in an open plan office
 - Make sure there is at least 1.5 metres between yourself and the next work station
 - Have meetings in large enough rooms for everyone to sit 1.5 metres apart (mark the desks with tape)
- Ensure you wipe down surfaces in your work area regularly



Practical tips for protecting yourself and others in the workplace

- If you are doing household deliveries:
 - If possible avoid face to face contact with those inside the house e.g. leave goods at the front door and call the house occupants to let them know their delivery has arrived
 - If you need to have face to face contact with those inside the house then stand at least 1.5 metres back from the door when it is answered
 - Practise hand hygiene when you get back in the car after every delivery
 - Wipe down surfaces in your car (including steering wheel and door handles) regularly

Remember to stay home when sick!





Keeping yourself and others safe

Remember whilst COVID-19 can seem scary, you can help to stop it spreading, protect yourself and those in your care. The most important things you can do are:

- wash your hands and make sure those in your care do the same
- practice respiratory etiquette and make sure those in your care do the same
- practice social distancing and make sure those in your care do the same.

Travel and COVID-19

- Currently, many cases of coronavirus in Australia are imported from overseas
- Therefore, if you are a frontline healthcare worker, carer, volunteer or have close contact with high-risk persons and you have recently travelled overseas, you may be asked to stay away from work for a certain period after your return
- Please review the below link for the latest updates and recommendations
<https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/cdna-song-novel-coronavirus.htm>

What if I develop symptoms of COVID-19?

- If you develop symptoms such as fever, dry cough, sore throat and fatigue, you should:
 - stay at home and practice standard infection control precautions
 - seek medical advice, it is important to call ahead first:
 - go to www.healthdirect.gov.au; or
 - call the National Coronavirus Information and Triage Line (1800 020 080); or
 - call your usual care provider
 - inform your workplace.

What if someone in my care develops symptoms of COVID-19?


- If someone in your care has symptoms of COVID-19, you should:
 - keep them at home, or if they are in a group facility keep them isolated in their own room
 - ensure they practice standard infection control precautions and seek medical advice promptly, remember to call ahead first.
- If someone in your care is suspected by a medical professional as having COVID-19 then you will need to practice further infection control measures including use of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)
 - You will need to seek further advice on this from your local public health unit or infection control specialist



COVID-19 Myths Busted

FACT:
The new coronavirus can be transmitted in areas with hot and humid climates


From the evidence so far, the new coronavirus can be transmitted in ALL AREAS, including areas with hot and humid weather. Regardless of climate, adopt protective measures if you live in, or travel to an area reporting COVID-19. The best way to protect yourself against COVID-19 is by frequently cleaning your hands. Eliminate viruses that may be on your hands and avoid infection that could occur by then touching your eyes, mouth, and nose.



World Health Organization #Coronavirus #COVID19 9 March 2020

FACT:
Cold weather and snow CANNOT kill the new coronavirus

There is no reason to believe that cold weather can kill the new coronavirus or other diseases. The normal human body temperature remains around 36.5°C and 37°C, regardless of the external temperature or weather. The most effective way to protect yourself against the new coronavirus is by frequently cleaning your hands with alcohol-based hand rub or washing them with soap and water.



World Health Organization #Coronavirus #COVID19



Taking a hot bath will not prevent you from catching COVID-19. Your normal body temperature remains around 36.5°C to 37°C, regardless of the temperature of your bath or shower. Actually, taking a hot bath with extremely hot water can be harmful, as it can burn you.

The best way to protect yourself against COVID-19 is by frequently cleaning your hands. By doing this you eliminate viruses that may be on your hands and avoid infection that could occur by then touching your eyes, mouth, and nose.



World Health Organization

#Coronavirus #COVID19

FACT:

Taking a hot bath does not prevent the new coronavirus disease



To date there has been no information nor evidence to suggest that the new coronavirus could be transmitted by mosquitoes.

The new coronavirus is a respiratory virus which spreads primarily through droplets generated when an infected person coughs or sneezes, or through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose.

To protect yourself, clean your hands frequently with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water. Also, avoid close contact with anyone who is coughing and sneezing.

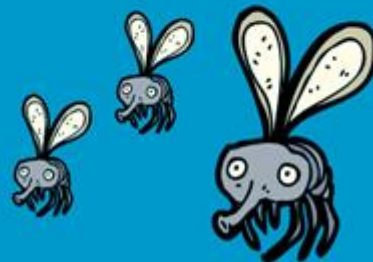


World Health Organization

#Coronavirus #COVID19

FACT:

The new coronavirus CANNOT be transmitted through mosquito bites





No. Hand dryers are not effective in killing the 2019-nCoV.

To protect yourself against the new coronavirus, you should frequently clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water. Once your hands are cleaned, you should dry them thoroughly by using paper towels or a warm air dryer.



#2019nCoV

Are hand dryers effective in killing the new coronavirus?



Thermal scanners are effective in detecting people who have developed a fever (i.e. have a higher than normal body temperature) because of infection with the new coronavirus.

However, they cannot detect people who are infected but are not yet sick with fever. This is because it takes between 2 and 10 days before people who are infected become sick and develop a fever.



#2019nCoV

How effective are thermal scanners in detecting people infected with the new coronavirus?





No. Spraying alcohol or chlorine all over your body will not kill viruses that have already entered your body. Spraying such substances can be harmful to clothes or mucous membranes (i.e., eyes, mouth). Be aware that both alcohol and chlorine can be useful to disinfect surfaces, but they need to be used under appropriate recommendations.



#2019nCoV

Can spraying alcohol or chlorine all over your body kill the new coronavirus?



No. Vaccines against pneumonia, such as pneumococcal vaccine and Haemophilus influenza type B (Hib) vaccine, do not provide protection against the new coronavirus.

The virus is so new and different that it needs its own vaccine. Researchers are trying to develop a vaccine against 2019-nCoV, and WHO is supporting their efforts.

Although these vaccines are not effective against 2019-nCoV, vaccination against respiratory illnesses is highly recommended to protect your health.



#2019nCoV

Do vaccines against pneumonia protect you against the new coronavirus?





No. There is no evidence that regularly rinsing the nose with saline has protected people from infection with the new coronavirus.

There is some limited evidence that regularly rinsing the nose with saline can help people recover more quickly from the common cold. However, regularly rinsing the nose has not been shown to prevent respiratory infections.



#2019nCoV

Can regularly rinsing your nose with saline help prevent infection with the new coronavirus?

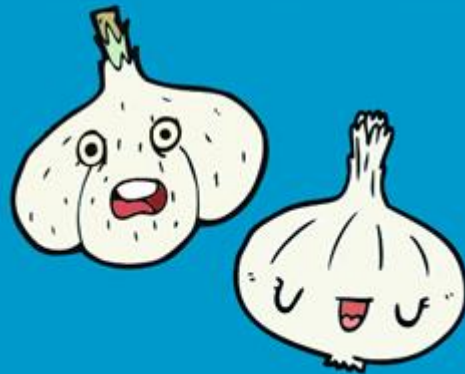


Garlic is a healthy food that may have some antimicrobial properties. However, there is no evidence from the current outbreak that eating garlic has protected people from the new coronavirus (2019-nCoV)



#2019nCoV

Can eating garlic help prevent infection with the new coronavirus?





People of all ages can be infected by the new coronavirus (nCoV-2019).

Older people, and people with pre-existing medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease) appear to be more vulnerable to becoming severely ill with the virus.

WHO advise people of all age to take steps to protect themselves from the virus, for example by following good hand hygiene and good respiratory hygiene.



#Coronavirus

Does the new coronavirus affect older people, or are younger people also susceptible?



No, antibiotics do not work against viruses, only bacteria.

The new coronavirus (2019-nCoV) is a virus and, therefore, antibiotics should not be used as a means of prevention or treatment.

However, if you are hospitalized for the 2019-nCoV, you may receive antibiotics since bacterial co-infection is possible.



#Coronavirus

Are antibiotics effective in preventing and treating the new coronavirus?





To date, there is no specific medicine recommended to prevent or treat the new coronavirus (2019-nCoV).

However, those infected with the virus should receive appropriate care to relieve and treat symptoms, and those with severe illness should receive optimized supportive care. Some specific treatments are under investigation, and will be tested through clinical trials.

WHO is helping to accelerate research and development efforts with a range of partners.



#Coronavirus

Are there any specific medicines to prevent or treat the new coronavirus?



Stay informed

- Stay informed on the latest developments about COVID-19. Up to date information is available at <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>
- Monitor news updates regarding local events and gatherings
- Follow current advice given by your national and local public health authority and your employer on how to protect yourself and others from COVID-19

Key messages for COVID-19

You can help protect yourself, your family, your workplace and your community

- Practice regular hand hygiene
- Practice social distancing
- Practice respiratory etiquette
- Seek medical advice, remember to call first, and inform your workplace if you have symptoms
- For further information go to:
 - your local public health unit (see links in Helpful Resources tab)
 - <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/coronavirus>