

# Physical distancing - protecting yourself and your family

## What is coronavirus (COVID-19)?

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a virus spreading across many communities in Australia, and in other countries. Coronavirus (COVID-19) can make some people very sick and can lead to severe illness, including problems with breathing and pneumonia.

Aboriginal people over the age of 50-years or those that have a pre-existing health condition, such as diabetes, asthma, heart and lung conditions, or immune problems are at higher risk of developing a severe illness associated with coronavirus (COVID-19).

## How is coronavirus (COVID-19) spread?

Coronavirus (COVID-19) spreads like the flu, from having close contact with someone who is either contagious or already sick with coronavirus (COVID-19).

Some people don't show signs when they are sick, but they can still spread it to others.

You can catch it from people who are already sick with coronavirus (COVID-19), especially when they cough or sneeze around you. You can also catch it from things they have touched that can spread the germs.

The virus can stay alive on surfaces and things they have touched for 2-5 days.

It can take between 2-14 days for someone to get sick after making contact with coronavirus (COVID-19)

The virus can't jump across a room and it can't travel long distances in the air, but there are important things you need to know and do, that can help stop the spread.

## What is Physical Distancing?

Physical distancing is a way to reduce physical contact with other people both in the community and in your home. This helps our community to slow down and stop the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) between people, to reduce your chances of either catching it or spreading coronavirus (COVID-19).

This means you must stay at home and avoid all gatherings, unless it is essential to do so.

Essential means if you must:

- visit the shops for food or other house items you need
- attend a medical appointment or provide caregiving
- exercise, but following the public gathering requirements
- work and study if you can't work or learn remotely
- help your loved ones to do any of the abovementioned.

The Victorian State government has restricted gatherings to no more than 2 people for work or education purposes.

You are allowed outside with more than 2 people, if they are part of your household.

If you do need to leave the house whilst restrictions are in place, make sure that you stay 1.5 metres away from anyone you meet up with.

To read more about staying at home and restricted activities visit the department's website here: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-stay-home-and-restricted-activities-directions-faq>

## What does 'close contact' mean?

It is important to keep some space or distance between you and others as much as you can (1-1.5 metres) and avoid having close contact with anyone who you know is sick.

A close contact could mean:

- being face-to-face with someone with coronavirus (COVID-19) for more than 15 minutes
- living in the same house or place
- coming into contact with the body fluids of someone who has the virus or is sick
- being in a closed space, or same room, with someone for more than two hours or more.

## Public Gatherings

We understand there will be challenges with postponing events in Aboriginal communities, particularly those of cultural significance – both celebrations and sorry business. To maintain the safety of families and communities it is advised that if events can be rescheduled, they must be.

If you are organising a gathering, you may need to postpone, reduce the number of people invited, or consider cancelling the event until further notice on the coronavirus (COVID-19) response.

**Any gathering must follow physical distancing rules, including:**

- to keep a healthy physical distance from other people of at least 1.5 metres
- considering connecting remotely with online video chat tools and applications, using your phone or other technology to limit close contact
- avoiding contact with anyone who is coughing or sneezing
- washing your hands often and for at least 20 seconds with warm soapy water or an alcohol-based hand rub.

The Victorian State government has restricted gatherings to no more than 2 people except for members of your household and for work or education purposes.

**Under Commonwealth guidelines:**

- 1 person per 4 square metres rule in all shops and businesses
- 10 or less people can attend a funeral
- 5 or less people can attend a wedding (including the couple, the celebrant and witnesses)

Aboriginal people over the age of 50-years or those that have a pre-existing health condition, such as diabetes, asthma, heart and lung conditions, or immune problems, are at higher risk for coronavirus (COVID-19) and should not attend any gatherings or community events.

Most public gathering places are closed in Victoria to protect the community and prevent people from spreading coronavirus (COVID-19). There are some exceptions for essential services and businesses, more information can be found on the department's dedicated page for coronavirus (COVID-19) here: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-covid-19-new-restrictions-and-closures>

## What else can you do to stop the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19)?



1. **Wash your hands regularly and thoroughly** for at least 20 seconds with warm soapy water or an alcohol-based hand rub. This kills viruses that may be on your hands and stops you from getting sick or spreading it.



2. **Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth and physical contact with others.** Try not to touch your face, as the virus can get from your hands and into your body through your eyes nose and mouth. Shaking hands with people can also spread the virus.



3. **Stay at home if you feel sick** until you feel better – even if it's a mild cough or fever, slight headache or runny nose. Stay away from others at home, as much as possible. Clean surfaces, kitchen utensils and things you use with disinfectant that kill germs. This can help to stop the spread of the virus to others.



4. **Cover your cough and sneeze** with the bend of your elbow or a tissue. Make sure you, and the people around you, cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. This helps to stop the spread of the virus.

For more information visit [www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au](http://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au)

[www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-information-aboriginal-communities](http://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-information-aboriginal-communities)

[www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/mental-health-resources-coronavirus-covid-19](http://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/mental-health-resources-coronavirus-covid-19)

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