

COVID-19 Testing



COVID-19 Testing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Victorians

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

Testing is now available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who show symptoms of COVID-19 such as respiratory symptoms (breathing difficulties, sore throat, cough), or fever (high temperature).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Victorians are considered a high risk for COVID-19 due to higher rates of pre-existing medical conditions such as diabetes, heart and lung disease than non-Aboriginal people. This means that it is important for Aboriginal people that are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms to get tested early and, if you do have COVID-19, ensure you can access treatment quickly.

What happens when you get sick with COVID-19?

A lot of people with COVID-19 will get a mild flu-like illness, but their health should improve with proper care and rest.

People with mild to moderate illness should:

- stay at home
- get plenty of rest and drink lots of fluids, just like they would if they have the flu
- stay away from other people until they get better, so not to spread it to others

People who get sick usually have:

- Fever
- Dry cough
- Sore throat
- Feeling really tired
- Body aches
- Find it hard to breathe
- Stomach pain or diarrhea

If you have a fever, cough and/or difficulty breathing contact your local health or medical service by phone.

- It's important that you call first to your doctor, clinic or health service so they can tell you the best thing to do and where to go.

- It's important that people only go to the hospital if you are told you should.
- This will help us from spreading the virus to others in the community. It also means our clinics and hospitals won't get swamped with people and the very sick can get the treatment they need

If you start feeling sick and develop a fever, shortness of breath, a cough or difficulty breathing, you should ring the COVID-19 hotline on 1800 675 398 for advice.

This number is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Should I get tested for Coronavirus?

If you are an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person and experiencing a fever at or above 38 degrees or have symptoms of an acute respiratory infection (shortness of breath, cough, sore throat) you can arrange for testing by contacting:

- the coronavirus 24-hour hotline 1800 675 398 or
- your doctor or
- emergency department at your local hospital or
- your local Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation

Remember to call ahead to your health clinic, GP or emergency department and mention your overseas travel so they can get you to the best place and be prepared for you to prevent the virus spreading.

It is also important to let them know you are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

If you experience difficulties breathing, chest pains or numbness call triple zero (000) for urgent assistance.

We recognise Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHO) are culturally safe places and that you may prefer to be treated by your local ACCHO. However, not all ACCHO's are currently able to perform COVID-19 testing.

The department is working closely with ACCHO's to fill this important role within the community. If your local ACCHO is not able to perform the test they are be able to provide advice on whether you need to be tested and where you should go.

Where are the coronavirus assessment centres?

Assessment centres have been established at many metro and regional Victorian hospitals. You don't need to call ahead if you attend one of the following clinics:

Metropolitan health services

- Alfred Hospital
- Austin Hospital
- Box Hill Hospital - Eastern Health
- Casey Hospital - Monash Health
- Dandenong Hospital - Monash Health
- Frankston Hospital - Peninsula Health
- Monash Medical Centre, Clayton - Monash Health
- Northern Hospital
- Royal Children's Hospital
- Royal Melbourne Hospital - Melbourne Health
- St Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne
- Sunshine Hospital - Western Health

Regional health services

- Ballarat Base Hospital - Ballarat Health Services
- Barwon Health North, Geelong - Barwon Health (please call 03 4215 4445 prior to attending)
- Bacchus Marsh - Djerrivarrh Health Services
- Benalla Health
- Bendigo Hospital
- Echuca Hospital - Echuca Regional Health
- Maryborough District Health Service
- Melton - Djerrivarrh Health Services
- Mildura - Sunraysia Community Health Services (pre-call 03 5021 7653)
- Phillip Island Health Hub - Bass Coast Health
- Shepparton Hospital - Goulburn Valley Health
- Swan Hill District Health
- Wangaratta Hospital - Northeast Health
- Warrnambool - South West Healthcare (pre-call 03 5563 1666)
- Western District Health Service - Hamilton
- Wimmera Health Care Group – Horsham
- Wodonga Campus - Albury Wodonga Health
- Wonthaggi Hospital - Bass Coast Health

If you start feeling sick and develop a fever, shortness of breath, a cough or difficulty breathing, you should ring the COVID-19 hotline on 1800 675 398 for advice. This number is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

What will happen when I get my test results back?

It may take several days for your results to come back. The facility where you get tested will advise how and when you can expect to receive your results.

If you test positive, you will receive care at home or in hospital depending on the severity of your symptoms.

If you test negative continue to self-quarantine until you are completely well, at the direction of your treating doctor.

What should I do when I have been tested?

Self-quarantine

If you have been tested for Coronavirus, then you need to self-quarantine until your results are returned to prevent the virus from spreading.

While you are in self-quarantine you:

- must not attend work, school, childcare or university
- must not go to other public places such as restaurants, cinemas or shopping centres
- must not use public transport or taxis
- must not allow visitors into your home - only those who usually live in the household should be in the home.
- must stay in a different room to other people as much as possible.

Stay up to date by visiting our [coronavirus website](#) for the latest advice for Victorians and people visiting Victoria.

To receive this publication in an accessible format phone 03 9096 5656, or email Aboriginal.Strategy.and.Oversight <aboriginalstrategyandoversight@dhhs.vic.gov.au>.

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