COVID-19 FAQs

What is this virus?

Coronaviruses can make humans and animals sick. Some coronaviruses can cause illness similar to the common cold and others can cause more serious diseases, including Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS). The virus first seen in Hubei Province, China is called 'novel' because it is new. COVID-19 has now been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) and there has been a significant increase in new cases across many countries in Europe and around the world. It is likely that the virus originally came from an animal, and there is evidence that it can spread from person-to-person.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms include fever OR an acute respiratory infection and include (but are not limited to) cough, sore throat, fatigue and shortness of breath with or without a fever.

How is the coronavirus spread?

The coronavirus is most likely to spread from person-to-person by:

- Direct close contact with a person whilst they are infectious;
- Close contact with a person with a confirmed infection coughs or sneezes; or
- Touching objects or surfaces (such as doorknobs or tables or face masks) contaminated from a cough or sneeze from a person with a confirmed infection, and then touching your mouth or face.

Most infections are transmitted by people when they have symptoms. There is now some evidence that people could be contagious before showing symptoms.

How can I help prevent the spread of COVID-19?

Practising good hand and sneeze/cough hygiene is the best defence against most viruses. You should:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water before and after eating as well as after attending the toilet
- Avoid contact with others (including touching, kissing, hugging, and other intimate contact)
- Cough and sneeze into your elbow
- If you are asked to wear a surgical face mask, after putting it on to cover your nose and mouth, do not touch the front of the mask and remove it using the ear loops or head straps.
- Dispose of the used mask into a waste bin and perform hand hygiene with soap and water or alcohol hand rub.

What does self-isolation mean?

Self-isolating can protect others and help stop the spread

We can all help slow the spread of COVID-19 in Australia.

To protect others you must:

- practise good hygiene
- practise social distancing
- follow the limits for public gatherings
- understand how to self-isolate if you need to

People who are directed to be isolated should not attend public places, in particular work, school, childcare or university. Only people who usually live in the household should be in the home. Do not allow visitors into the home. There is no need to wear masks in the home. Where possible, get others such as friends or family, who are not required to be isolated to get food or other necessities for you.

For more information on isolation, please visit the NSW Health website home isolation guidance page **via the links below** (embed links).

Home isolation guidance

Self-isolation (self-quarantine for coronavirus (COVID-19)

Professor Hugh Montgomery on coronavirus

How is the virus treated?

There is no specific treatment for coronaviruses. Antibiotics are not effective against viruses. Most of the symptoms can be treated with supportive medical care. Some people will require hospitalisation.

Should I wear a face mask?

A face mask will not protect you against becoming infected. While the use of face masks can help to prevent transmission of disease from infected patients to others, face masks are not currently recommended for use by healthy members of the public for the prevention of infections like novel coronavirus. If you are unwell with cold and flu-like symptoms, then a mask can be worn when you attend the hospital or GP office for assessment.

Where can I get more information?

Visit the Australian Government Department of Health homepage at www.health.gov.au.

Call the Public Health Information Line on 1800 004 599 or NSW Health on 1300 066 055 or the Corona virus hotline on 1800 020 080 (24 hours).

If you require translating or interpreting services, call 131 450.

Please call Triple Zero (000) for emergencies only.