

# Your COVID-19 Questions Answered

Last updated: 24/10/2022

These FAQs have been created for community-based At Home Care team members as a guide to working while COVID-19 is active in the WA community.

If you have any questions that haven't been answered below, please don't hesitate to get in touch with your Care Team Coordinator who will liaise with At Home Care's COVID-19 Committee, or email [COVID@athomehealth.com.au](mailto:COVID@athomehealth.com.au).

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## Your Safety and Protection

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What can I do to protect myself from exposure to COVID-19 when my workplace is a client's home or the community?

Ensure you are familiar with and adhere to strict infection prevention principles outlined in your training, including:

- regular and thorough hand hygiene,
- surface cleaning.
- social distancing (where possible)

Although it is no longer mandated for masks to be worn in the workplace, some clients may ask you to do so, and it is recommended when you are not able to safely distance from the client to wear a mask.

For more guidance, refer to the online training available on ASTRO or refer to the Department of Health's recommendations [here](#).

Does At Home Care have sufficient PPE stock we can access?

Yes. We have different levels of PPE available to you, depending on your workplace circumstances.

You can collect disposable surgical masks from any of the At Home Care offices during regular business hours. Contact your Care Team Coordinator or call 9381 3344 to confirm prior to collecting.

What happens if one of my clients tests positive to COVID-19?

We are committed to continuing to provide services for clients who test positive for COVID-19, as we would if a client became unwell with another virus. If you work with a client who is known to have COVID-19, we will seek to limit cross overs with other clients until the case has been resolved, to minimise the risk of transmission.

I am feeling the stress of the COVID-19 situation. What can I do?

It is normal to feel uncertain or stressed out by the changes we have all been experiencing. At Home Care has an Employee Assistance Program which provides up to four free, confidential phone counselling sessions to all At Home Care team members or their immediate family members. Contact our accredited provider, Assure on 1800 808 374 or visit <https://assureprograms.com.au/>.

## Clients living in the community suspected of, or having, COVID-19

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### What do I do if a client or a member of the household has symptoms of COVID-19?

You should contact your Care Team Coordinator in the 1<sup>st</sup> instance to report you suspect the client or another member of the household is showing COVID 19 symptoms.

The Client Engagement Coordinator or our Clinical on call will then liaise with the client or primary support person i.e. partner/support coordinator/case manager, recommending a clinical assessment for the client or conduct a RAT. A clinical assessment may include visiting a GP or attending a [COVID 19 Testing Clinic](#).

If the client cannot arrange a clinical assessment, attend a testing clinic or access a RAT there is also a [Home Testing Service](#) available which can be requested by a GP. This is generally organized by the primary care provider, being the clients General Practitioner. The GP will make a request of the staff member from the relevant pathology group to visit the home.

While awaiting testing and test results, the client should stay home until the result is known and symptoms resolve. If possible, they should minimise interactions with other people and family members living in the residence. It is also recommended, if possible, the client wear a mask however this is their choice.

At Home Care will consider ongoing support based on discussions with the client or their primary support person and arrange for appropriate PPE to be delivered to the clients home to minimise the risk of infection whilst the results are pending.

The CTC, Care Team Manager and Resource Manager will minimise the number of care workers who come into direct contact with the client and consider which services are critical to keeping the individual safe.

If the client's test results are negative, it is recommended they remain at home until symptoms have resolved.

### What do I do if a client or a member of the household is COVID-19 positive?

If you are in the home and the client or a member of their household tests positive for COVID-19, you should report this to your Care Team Coordinator. The Client Engagement Coordinator or Clinical Team Member will seek to speak with the client as to ongoing supports.

Clients and their primary support person have been asked should we not be in the home when they test positive to notify us of their result prior to the next shift.

At Home Care will arrange for appropriate PPE to be delivered should the client choose to continue with supports in the home. Should you be on shift at the time it is recommended you minimise contact with the client or member of the household.

Where notice is received, and no supports are in the home your Care Team Coordinator will liaise with you about the situation.

### What information is required if a client or household member tests positive to COVID-19?

We will need to know the date on which they tested positive and if at the time masks were being worn whilst on shift. This will allow us to determine if you are considered a Close Contact.

### What if a client we care for at home with COVID-19 becomes clinically unwell?

At Home Care will recommend to the client or their primary support person that they should seek transfer via ambulance to hospital. The Client Engagement Coordinator or Clinical Team will notify the ambulance service in advance that the client is a confirmed COVID-19.

As part of this process we will advise the client or their primary support person to take any useful written information to the healthcare team at the hospital, which may include:

- medications
- communication plan
- care preferences
- behaviour support plan
- advance care plan.

It is most likely you will not have the option to stay with the client if they are admitted to hospital. This will be a decision of the healthcare team at the hospital on a case-by-case basis.

The Client Engagement Coordinator will advise the client or their support person as to whether they want to arrange a deep clean before returning home. It is not generally recommended by WA Health however this is the client's choice.

### What do we do if a client is discharged from the hospital with COVID-19?

When the hospital decides the client can return home the Client Engagement Coordinator will speak with the client or their primary support person to confirm the home has been cleaned.

The healthcare team will discuss hospital discharge and transport arrangements with the client and their family. The hospital will refer the client to their GP or treating team to be responsible for ongoing medical care.

## Your Ability to Work and Earn

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### What will happen if my client(s) do not want support in the home? Will I still be able to work?

Yes. If client(s) you usually support cancel your shifts, your CTC will work with you to find suitable alternative shifts.

## What happens if I am required to remain away from work due being unwell, a close contact or have tested positive to COVID-19?

At Home Care has always followed the health advice for workers and clients in relation to close contacts or if an individual has tested positive. This information can be found [WA Health](#). If you have tested positive, experience symptoms or unwell, you will be removed from all shifts until these have resolved.

If you are a close contact but with no symptoms and subject to the client or their primary support person agreeing you can continue to work however, this will require wear a mask when indoors and testing via a RAT for 5 days.

You will be able to utilise your existing sick leave, paid annual leave and personal leave during the period you are isolating for, and you may be eligible for additional government payments. Please refer to the following question and answer for more information.

## What are my options if I run out of paid sick/ annual/ personal leave or I'm on a casual contract, and can't work because of COVID-19?

In addition to your existing sick leave, paid annual leave and personal leave which you can use while away from work, you may be eligible to receive government payments.

The WA government introduced a [COVID-19 Test Isolation Payment](#), which you can access if required to be away from work for the period as prescribed. To receive a payment, you must:

- you are not able to work from home,
- you would have been likely to work during the period of isolation, and;
- do not have access to paid leave.

If you are facing hardship as a result of the COVID-19, you may qualify for additional Government payments through [Services Australia](#).

## Rapid Antigen Tests (RAT)

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### What is a RAT and how are they used?

A rapid antigen test (RAT) is a convenient, safe and fast way to test for COVID 19 and recognised in WA as an acceptable form of test. They will provide a result within 15 to 30 minutes and are available for purchase a supermarkets, pharmacies, and other supplier.

There are 2 types of RAT:

- Saliva test – user spits into a tube or suck on a swab.
- Nasal swab – user swabs each nostril.

Each kit will contain:

- Test device.
- Spit funnel or nasal swab.
- Test tube with dropper cap to collect samples.

- Buffer (chemical solution that extracts the virus from samples)
- Instructions for use.

Some kits contain only saliva pens. These kits do not require a test device or dropper cap. All kits have a QR code which links to a video that demonstrate how to take a test.

### When do I do a RAT?

To reduce risk of transmitting COVID-19 a RAT should be taken if

- you have COVID-19 symptoms.
- you are a close contact and plan to leave your home.
- attending a large gathering in a crowded place such as a wedding, funeral or sporting event.
- visiting a person who is vulnerable to risks of COVID-19
- visiting a high-risk setting, e.g. an aged care facility, hospital, or disability group home
- recommended by the Department of Health

### How do I get RAT kits?

#### WA Free RAT Program

The WA Government offers households through the [WA free RAT program](#) access to free individual Rapid Antigen Tests. Each household in WA can collect free Rapid Antigen Tests from:

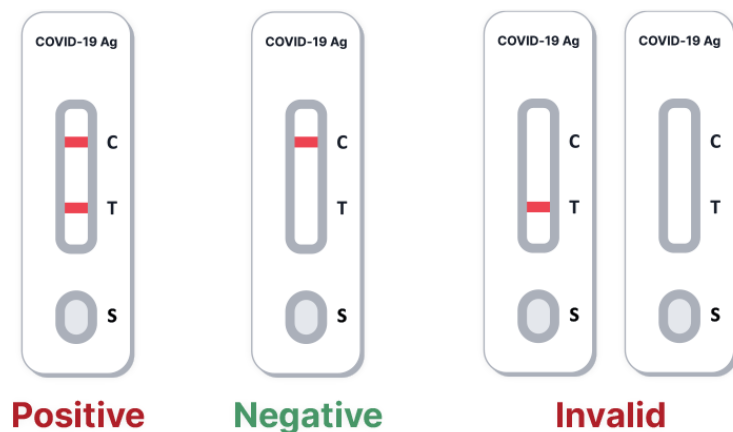
- metropolitan drive-through collection points and COVID-19 vaccination clinics
- regional COVID-19 testing clinics.

#### At Home Care

At times of high caseloads or the unavailability of a RAT we have available limited tests, and you can speak to your Client Engagement Coordinator.

### What does a RAT result look like?

Most RAT devices will display results in a window on the device. Every RAT comes with instructions on how to use the test and what the results will mean. Below is an example of how results could look.



### What should I do if there is an 'invalid' result?

If a test produces an 'invalid' result, it means the RAT has not worked correctly. If this happens, throw it away and do another test.

### How do I show the result of the test to AHC?

Upon completion of the test, if it is negative, you must provide AHC with the proof. Please write the date on the RAT and email a photo to your manager. If the test is positive this must be registered (see below), and proof of registration must be provided.

### How do I register a positive RAT?

Those who have administered a RAT at home and tested positive to COVID-19 must register their result online with the Department of Health at [Logging a Test](#) or by calling 13 26843. This can be done for yourself, or on behalf of another person, and should only take about a minute to complete.

Mandatory information required on the RAT register will include:

- Contact details
- Date and time of test
- Personal details about the individual's situation

Once registered, WA Health will assess how to best manage the situation, including whether any health care is needed, and will provide advice on what to do next.

## Schools and Childcare

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### Will AHC still provide care to complex care children in a school environment?

Yes, provided all appropriate protocols are followed e.g. mask wearing, appropriate safe distancing (where practicable), good hand hygiene and cough and sneeze protocols.

Like any shift, if you are not feeling well, are a close contact or tested positive, you must follow the WA Health protocols.

## Client Rights and Responsibilities

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### Do I need to need to be vaccinated?

Effective from 10 June 2022, the government mandatory vaccination policy only applies to workforces working within the most vulnerable to protect them from severe disease. This means workers in the following sectors must be triple vaccinated:

- healthcare and health support workers in hospitals and primary health care settings.
- workers in residential aged care facilities.
- workers in residential disability settings (Dianella Home).

People providing support to individuals in a private residential (home) setting, are not subject to the mandatory vaccination requirements. AHC continues to strongly encourage vaccinations.

While we encourage Clients to get vaccinated, they are not required by the government to do so, and we respect their right to choose.

### [Do I have to wear a mask while in a client's home?](#)

The wearing of masks in the home, other than for our services in the Dianella Home, are no longer mandated by the Government. At Home Care still strongly encourages the wearing of masks as this helps protect you, the client and other workers.

While we encourage clients to wear a mask, their home is not deemed their workplace and it is their choice to wear a mask or not.

### [What if a client wants me to wear a mask or follow other restrictions in their home?](#)

It is the clients right to determine who supports are provided in their home. If you have any queries you should speak with your CTC.

### [Can family or friends of a client request I show them my vaccination status?](#)

You are not required to provide proof of your vaccination status to a client or their family and friends.

We previously wrote to all our clients informing them we them we adhered to the Government mandate at the time regarding vaccinations.

If your clients, their families, or friends have any queries about this, you can advise them to contact their Client Engagement Coordinator and they will speak with them directly.

## [WA COVID-19 Definitions](#)

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At Home Care has always relied on the defined health definitions and we would refer you to the following links –

[Close Contact](#)

[COVID Positive](#)