

Your COVID-19 Questions Answered

These Frequently Asked Questions are designed to answer the common questions you may have about your care at this time and how At Home Care is continuing to navigate COVID-19.

If your question does not appear below, please reach out to your Engagement Coordinator/Area Manager on 08 9381 3344 or email COVID@athomehealth.com.au.

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At Home Care's COVID-19 Preparation

What preventative measures are you continuing to take to maintain the continuity of my care?

Our aim is to continue providing you with consistent care services throughout the impact of CV19. Here are some of the measures we have taken since the start of CV19 and continue to do:

- Recruitment strategies including an overseas visa program, targeted advertising in other sectors so to increase our workforce, ongoing, upskilling of existing team members, and identifying team members willing to increase their working hours, transition of casual workers to permanent workers. We currently employ over 500 Nurses and Support Workers.
- Maintaining a reliable relief workforce of office-based team members to provide complex disability care.
- Continuing to reinforce hygiene and reporting protocols, providing team members with PPE and workforce education.
- Securing a large stock of Rapid Antigen Tests (RAT) so affected workers can return to work as quickly as possible and maintaining adequate levels of PPE.
- Securing and maintaining stock of appropriate PPE which is readily deployable to our workers.
- Continuing to monitor changes in Government Health advice.

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

Yes, At Home Care will continue to provide care in the school environment and follow all appropriate health protocols and where required school protocols (e.g. mask wearing, appropriate safe distancing (where practicable), good hand hygiene and cough and sneeze protocols).

Like any shift, if the team member is not feeling well, is a close contact or tested positive they will not attend shift and follow the health recommendations.

How will my care team change in high transmission or other periods?

Due to our strict COVID-19 procedures, it is likely you will be affected in high transmission periods or other periods during the pandemic (i.e. waves) with COVID-19 stay home requirements affecting members of your regular care team. In this situation, we will provide you with support from other At Home Care team members who you may not know yet.

Please know we always aim to fill shifts in line with your staffing preferences, however at times we may need to suggest a team member who is unknown to you or may not be in line with your preferences.

Our goal is to avoid interruptions to your supports and having more flexibility in team members will greatly assist us to fill your roster each week.

Any shifts filled by team members who are new to you have been appropriately trained, will be briefed by your Engagement Coordinator/Area Manager, have access to your Nursing Care Plan, and will complete a buddy shift (if possible).

If you are uncomfortable receiving care from other At Home Care team members, we can provide specialised training to your family members or friends to support you.

Protection from COVID-19

How is At Home Care protecting me from COVID-19?

There are no longer any mandatory vaccination requirements however prior to this all our team members were required to have vaccinations in line with health directions. At Home Care continues to strongly encourage all team members to be vaccinated and keep these up to date.

Masks are also no longer mandated in the community or home environments and therefore this is currently not a requirement. We continue to monitor health guidelines and if there are recommendations will seek to keep our team informed about any changes.

Should you wish staff to wear masks in your home please advise them accordingly and let us know so we can update your profile on our client management system.

If a member of your team is unwell or reports as being a close contact with symptoms, they will be removed from shift and return to work when their symptoms have resolved per current health recommendations.

Where permitted by health guidelines close contacts with no symptoms can continue to work however, they will be required to undertake a RAT for 5 days and wear a mask indoors. At Home Care will work together with you to determine if you would like to continue with the worker if they have no symptoms.

At Home Care has maintained a large stock of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and is well positioned to respond quickly to suspected or positive cases.

What process does At Home Care follow if one of my team tests positive to COVID-19 or is required to stay home?

If a member of your team tests positive or reports being a close contact, they will be removed from shifts until they are symptoms free in line with the health recommendations.

Ideally, our aim will be to have these shifts covered by another member of your care team who is known and familiar with your supports. This may not always be possible, and we may have to suggest another At Home Care team member you may not know yet.

These team members will be appropriately trained, briefed by your Engagement Coordinator/Area Manager, and have access to your Nursing Care Plan and other resources pertinent to your supports.

Where possible, we will arrange for a buddy shift with any new team member(s) who support you however this may not always be possible if other staff are also impacted by COVID 19.

If you are uncomfortable receiving care from other members of the At Home Care team, we can provide specialised training to your family members or friends to support you.

How much clinical PPE does At Home Care have?

At Home Care has a large stock of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including gowns, respiratory masks, face shields and goggles, gloves and sanitation supplies to ensure we can care for you safely should you have to stay at home, develop symptoms, or test positive for COVID-19.

If you have to stay at home, develop symptoms or test positive for COVID-19, a PPE kit will be delivered to your home. Your care team will be supported by the At Home Care clinical and COVID-19 teams to set up two PPE stations with your support so we can take the appropriate precautions while we continue to provide your supports.

Can I request to see my care team's vaccination certificate?

As advised above there is no longer a mandate in place for community support workers in relation to vaccines. During the period when this mandate was in place the entire At Home Care team, including office-based staff, fully complied with this mandate including required boosters.

If you have any queries about the management of At Home Care's vaccination records, please get in touch with your Engagement Coordinator/Area Manager who can speak about it with you in more detail.

I prefer my At Home Care team to wear a mask in my home. Is that okay?

There is no longer a mandate for masks to be worn whilst performing supports however if this is your preference then we are happy to make this a part of your normal care routine. It should be noted that some of your team may elect not to work in the home and this might impact some shifts.

If you decide you would like your team to continue wearing masks, please advise your Engagement Coordinator/Area Manager and we will update your profile on our client management system.

Do I have to wear a mask while At Home Care team members are in my home?

No. As your home is your own private space, there is no requirement to wear a mask in your home. However, you may choose to wear a mask while other people are around to help protect yourself and those around you from potential exposure to COVID-19.

I am a close contact, have symptoms or test positive to COVID-19

How do I know if I am a close contact?

Depending on which state you live will determine the definition of whether you are a close contact however generally a close contact is defined as a household or household like contact, or intimate partner of a person with COVID-19 who has had contact with them during their infectious period.

The infectious period is taken from 48 hours before the onset of symptoms or before the positive test result if no symptoms.

The best resources for keeping up to date are your local health websites –

WA Health [website](#)

[Victoria Health](#)

[Queensland Health](#)

Will I, and how will I, be notified if one of my team tests positive or has to stay home?

We will contact you as quickly as possible once we are alerted to a member of your care team displaying symptoms, testing positive or having to stay home as a close contact. This is likely to be by phone for urgency, followed up with further calls, texts, emails or letters in line with your communication preferences.

At Home Care is well-positioned to respond quickly to suspected or positive cases.

What will happen if I am a close contact?

At Home Care will discuss the arrangements for your ongoing support and provide full clinical PPE for your care team.

We will arrange for a PPE kit be delivered to your home. This kit is to provide the initial PPE and further stock will be provided within 24 – 48 hours depending on your level of support during the week.

Your care team will be supported to set up two PPE stations with your home so we can take the appropriate precautions while we continue to provide your supports .

If you have symptoms, it is recommended you stay home for at least 5 days and until your symptoms have resolved. At Home Care will use the 5 days as a guide if your symptoms have resolved your team will no longer wear full clinical PPE.

If you do not have any symptoms, it is recommended you do a RAT for 5 days and if leaving the home where a mask if possible.

At Home Care will use the 5 days as a guide and speak with you about whether you have any symptoms and if not, PPE will no longer be required, regarding the and once your symptoms have resolved,

COVID-19 FAQs as at December 2023

When should I get tested for COVID-19?

One of the most important things you can do to prevent the spread of COVID-19 is to have a test immediately if you experience any of the main symptoms. The health advice is you should get tested if experiencing:

- fever ($\geq 37.5C$) or recent history of fever
- cough
- shortness of breath
- sore throat
- runny nose
- loss of smell or taste.

If you experience any of these symptoms (even if they are normal for you), please let someone on your care team know and get tested as soon as possible. One of your team members can assist you by helping you access a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT).

If necessary, At Home Care can provide you with a Rapid Antigen Test. PCR testing is still available however this will now require a GP referral. Telehealth services are available, and you should discuss with your GP whether you are able to access CV19 anti-viral medications.

You should await the results of your test before deciding the next course of action.

What will At Home Care do if I display symptoms of COVID-19?

At Home Care will work with you and your primary support person to arrange access to, if not already available, a RAT. If necessary, we can assist in arranging a clinical assessment which may include visiting or accessing a telehealth appointment with a GP.

A PPE kit will be delivered to your home and your team will be supported by the At Home Care to set up two PPE stations so we can take the appropriate precautions while we continue to provide your care.

At Home Care will discuss the arrangements for your ongoing support, assist you to understand the current health advice regarding COVID-19 and provide full clinical PPE for your care team.

If your test results are negative, At Home Care will support you at home until your symptoms have resolved.

What will happen if I have tested positive to COVID-19?

If you or a member of your household tests positive for COVID-19 please advise At Home Care straight away so we can work with you to arrange your ongoing support, assist you whilst staying at home and provide full PPE for your care team.

What information will be required from me if I test positive to COVID-19?

Should you test positive from either a RAT or PCR please let your Engagement Coordinator/Area Manager know or if after hours our on-call support team.

We will likely only need to know if you would like your supports to continue as normal or whether you wish to suspend the services whilst your symptoms resolve. This is something you can discuss with us at the time.

It is also recommended you identify other people who may be close contacts and let them know. This will likely only be members of the same household.

What will At Home Care do if I become clinically unwell with COVID-19?

At Home Care will recommend that you and/or your primary support person receive a patient transfer via ambulance to hospital. At Home Care can assist you in notifying the ambulance service in advance if you have a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19.

We recommend you take any useful written information to the healthcare team at the hospital, e.g. medications, communication plan, care preferences, behaviour support plan (if appropriate), advance care plan etc.

It is likely members of your At Home Care team will not have the option to stay with you if you are admitted to hospital. The healthcare team at the hospital will review this on a case-by-case basis.

Your Engagement Coordinator/Area Manager will stay in contact with you and your primary support person throughout your hospital stay and speak to you about the next steps.

NDIS [funding](#) is available to clients required to self-isolate or who require full PPE or deep cleaning.

What happens if I am discharged from hospital with COVID-19?

The hospital will decide when you can return home and discuss discharge and transport arrangements with you and your primary support person. The hospital will refer you to your GP or treating team for your ongoing medical care.

At Home Care will resume support in your home with full clinical PPE, if required.

Meetings with At Home Care

What process do I follow to be able to meet with my At Home Care team in person?

*Subject to change without notice

This will depend on the level of the virus in the community and whether you are currently suffering any CV19 symptoms or close contact. We are fully capable of conducting meetings virtually and will work with you to source the most appropriate format.

Where the virus is low or not considered a risk normal face to face contact will continue.

Rapid Antigen Tests (RAT)

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 as an acceptable form of test. They will provide a result within 15 to 30 minutes. 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. hospital
- recommended by your local Department of Health.

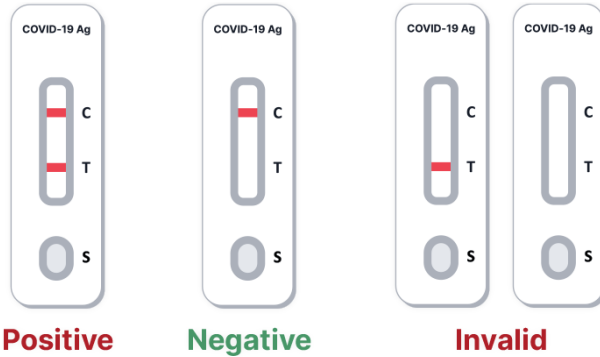
Use of RAT for children?

All RAT kits contain guidance on their recommended use. Check the suitability of using the RAT on children and follow the instructions closely. Parents or guardians should perform or supervise RATs on children.

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.

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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, discard it, and do another test.

How do I need to register a positive RAT?

There is no longer a requirement to register positive RAT results with state health departments.

How do I get RAT kits?

Western Australia – RAT kits are available for purchase from supermarkets, pharmacies, and other retailers.

Victoria – Free RATs are available from local councils. You can collect 2 packs of 5 + an extra 2 packs for each person in the household and people with disability and carers can get 4 packs of 5.

Queensland - if you have an eligible Commonwealth concession card or are part of an eligible group, you can access **free RAT kits** from [Queensland Health RAT distribution points](#). Alternatively, they can be purchased in retail shops and pharmacies.

Extra Support

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

If you are experiencing any stress or anxiety due to COVID-19, please let us know so we can support you.

Please remember support is always available from the incredible organisations below:

- The Australian Red Cross' COVID Connect is a free social phone call to provide support and community connection to adults who feel socially isolated due to COVID-19
<https://www.redcross.org.au> or 1800 733 276.
- The Lifeline telephone, text and webchat services are available 24/7
www.lifeline.org.au/get-help, 13 11 14 or 0477 131 114.
- The Beyond Blue Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Service is also available 24/7
<https://coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au> or 1800 512 348.

I have more questions not in this document.

It is important to us that you feel safe and supported in this changing landscape. As always, we are only ever a phone call or email away. You can give us a call on 089381 3344 or reach us at COVID@athomehealth.com.au with any COVID-19 specific queries.

Helpful links

Depending on where you receive support each jurisdiction provides the most recent and up to date information about COVID 19.

- [WA Health COVID 19](#)
- [CV19 Victoria](#)
- [CV19 Queensland](#)