

Your COVID-19 Questions Answered

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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 community.

If you have any questions that haven't been answered below, please don't hesitate to get in touch with your Engagement Coordinator/Area Manager who will liaise with At Home Care's COVID-19 Committee, or email COVID@athomehealth.com.au.

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Your Safety and Protection

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.

You can also choose to wear a mask to protect yourself and your clients. At Home Care has a large stock of masks which are available for use.

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 Engagement Coordinator/Area Manager or call 08 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

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

You should contact your Engagement Coordinator/Area Manager in the 1st instance to report you suspect the client or another member of the household is showing COVID 19 symptoms. If they have them available, you can recommend they undertake a RAT to confirm.

The Engagement Coordinator/Area Manager or our Clinical on call will also liaise with the client or primary support person i.e. partner/support coordinator/case manager, recommending they or their family member conduct a RAT. A clinical assessment could also be considered, which may be speaking with the clients GP for a referral for undertaking a PCR test.

Ideally 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 Engagement Coordinator/Area Manager will aim to 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 Engagement Coordinator/Area Manager. They or the 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 Engagement Coordinator/Area Manager 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 the appropriate response.

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. Should the client or their primary support person not be able to notify the ambulance service in advance the client is a confirmed COVID-19 patient the Engagement Coordinator/Area Manager or Clinical Team will provide this support.

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 (if applicable)
- 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 Engagement Coordinator/Area Manager will continue to liaise with the client if they are well enough or their support person as to any additional supports they might require in hospital and will keep you informed.

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 Engagement Coordinator/Area Manager will speak with the client or their primary support person to confirm the next steps and the home has been cleaned.

We will seek to engage with the hospital prior to discharge and any additional arrangement which need to be put in place. 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

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 Engagement Coordinator/Area Manager 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 in relation to close contacts or if an individual has tested positive. 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 may be able to continue to work however, this will require wearing a mask, gloves, and face shield when with the client and testing via a RAT for 5 days. The results of each test will need to be sent to At Home Care.

For details about protocols for CV+ and Close Contact the most up to date information is available for the following health departments [WA Health](#) [Victoria Health](#) [Queensland Health](#)

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.

Unfortunately all government payment schemes have now ended limiting supports for casual workers however there may be other payments available through [Services Australia](#). For our casual workers in Victoria, you should consider registering with [CV19 Financial Support and Relief](#)

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 and are available for purchase at supermarkets, pharmacies, and other suppliers (see below for further details).

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?

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.

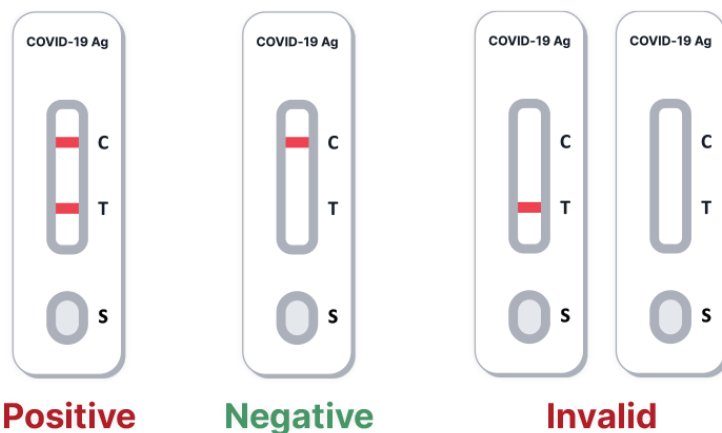
Queensland - if you have an eligible Commonwealth concession card or are part of an eligible group, you can access **free RAT kits** from [Queensland Health RAT distribution points](#). Alternatively, they can be purchased in retail shops and pharmacies.

At Home Care

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

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.

Do I need to register a positive RAT?

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

Schools and Childcare

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

Yes, we will continue to provide these supports and follow any appropriate health and/or school protocols 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 health protocols.

Client Rights and Responsibilities

Do I need to need to be vaccinated?

The requirement for mandatory vaccinations has ceased however we strongly encourage vaccinations and boosters however this is not required to work in the sector and is a personal choice.

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 is no longer mandated by the health advice. There may be times when due to waves or other situation we would encourage the wearing of masks, however this would only be based on health recommendations.

What if a client wants me to wear a mask or follow other restrictions in their home?

Some clients may have health conditions that put them at risk and therefore we support them in their choices. The wearing of masks may be one of these. If you have any queries you should speak with Engagement Coordinator/Area Manager.

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 then 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 Engagement Coordinator/Area Manager and they will speak with them directly.

COVID-19 Resources

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

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