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| Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Advice to Victorians on Transmission Avoidance |
| Actions to take around physical distancing  Updated 20 March 2020 |

## Slowing the spread of coronavirus in Victoria

Victorians should act now to reduce the risk of infection from coronavirus (COVID-19).

There are a number of actions that Victorians can take, and a number of actions that employers and organisations can start to take, to help reduce the risk of infection and slow the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the Victorian community.

These interventions are known as ‘transmission reduction, or ‘physical distancing’ measures.

These are particularly important in reducing the spike of infections and protecting our elderly and those with chronic diseases or pre existing medical conditions.

The situation is rapidly changing, and this advice will be updated regularly. Please check the Department of Health and Human Services coronavirus (COVID-19) website at [www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus](http://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus) for updates.

The measures described in this document are strongly recommended by the Chief Health Officer, Department of Health and Human Services, in order to protect Victorians from transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

## Staying connected as a community

Keep connected as a community by taking some simple steps.

* Stay informed. Use information from reputable sources, for example the [DHHS coronavirus website.](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus)
* Support others in your community. Look out for your neighbours and family members.
* Where possible, keep connected to your family, friends and work colleagues through phone, email and social media.
* Do not panic buy foods, medicines or other goods. Hoarding can harm vulnerable people and communities.

## Take personal action to reduce your exposure

* Do not travel overseas or take a cruise.
* Stay healthy with good nutrition, regular exercise, sensible drinking, sleeping well, and if you are a smoker, quitting.
* Do not participate in community gatherings including community sport if you are elderly or have pre‑existing medical conditions.
* Take the following hygiene actions:
  + Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, sneezing, or using the toilet. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitiser that contains at least 60 per cent alcohol.
  + Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
  + Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don’t have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow.
  + Do not share drinking bottles, crockery and cutlery.
* Stop shaking hands, hugging or kissing as a greeting.
* Ensure a distance of 1.5 metres is kept between yourself and others.
* **Get vaccinated for flu (influenza) as soon as available.** This could help reduce the risk of further problems.
* Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces regularly, for example telephones, keyboards, door handles, light switches and, bench tops.

## Prepare for quarantine or self-isolation

* Ensure you have enough non-perishable food for you and your family for 14 days.
* Ensure you have enough medication for you and your family for 14 days.
* Plan with friends and family how you would manage if you need to self- isolate for 14 days.

## Take personal action to protect your community

* If you have returned from overseas you must self-isolate at home or in a hotel for 14 days.
* Do not organise or attend indoor gatherings of 100 or more people, or outdoor gatherings of 500 or more people. This is a directive from the Victorian Chief Health Officer and Victorian Government.
* If you have had close contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the previous 14 days you must self-isolate and must not participate in community gatherings including community sport.
* **S**tay home if you are sick and don’t expose others. If you are unwell with flu-like symptoms, do not go outside your property or home, do not go to work, school or shops unless it is essential – for example to seek medical care.
* Everyone should avoid crowds if possible. If you must be in a crowd, keep the time short.
* Visits shops, cafes and restaurants sparingly. Where possible, consider home/office delivery and take-aways.
* Where possible, use debit and credit cards instead of cash and make use of online and self-serve transactions (for example, Myki top ups).
* If using a changeroom, do not share items like towels and soap bars, and wash your hands after changing.
* Only travel when necessary and use public transport in less busy periods if you can. Walk or cycle to work if possible.
* If you are elderly or have pre existing medical conditions do not use public transport.
* Ride in the back of taxis, uber and ride shares.
* Do not travel overseas or take a cruise.
* Consider cancelling or postponing small family and community events – for example birthday parties, and remember, indoor events must be less than 100 people and outdoor events must be less than 500 people.

## Ban on mass gatherings: Government Direction

Mass gatherings have the potential for serious public health consequences if they are not planned and managed carefully.

The following directions for gatherings are now in effect in Victoria:

* Organising, attending or allowing of non-essential outdoor mass gatherings of 500 or more people is prohibited.
* Organising, attending or allowing of non-essential indoor mass gatherings of 100 or more people is prohibited.

An indoor gathering is a gathering within a single undivided enclosed area (i.e. areas, rooms or premises enclosed by a roof and walls, regardless of whether the roof or walls or any part of them are permanent, temporary, open or closed.

This does not apply to essential activities such as public transportation, schools, medical and health care facilities, pharmacies, emergency service facilities, correctional facilities, youth justice centres or other places of custody, courts or tribunals, Parliaments, food markets, supermarkets and grocery stores, shopping centres, office buildings, factories, construction sites, and mining sites, where it is necessary for their normal operation.

Other social distancing and hygiene practices are required in these settings. Food markets should control the customers and stall density should be reduced to decrease the risk of corona (COVID-19) transmission.

ANZAC Day ceremonies and events should be cancelled due to the high proportion of older Australians who attend such events and the increased risk posed to such individuals. There should be no marches. A small streamed/filmed ceremony involving officials at a state level may occur.

## Actions for community sport, swimming pools and gyms

All community sport participants must play a role to help reduce the transmission of corona (COVID‑19), including those organising, attending or supporting attendance at these activities. Contact sports have a greater risk of transmission than other sports and should be considered on a case-by-case basis. Use of gyms and indoor fitness centres may continue. Swimming can continue in well managed and maintained pools chlorinated in accordance with Australian standards and guidelines.

The following actions should be undertaken now:

* Do not attend and participate in community sport or swimming if you:
  + have travelled internationally or have had close contact of a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the last 14 days; or
  + are at high risk, including the elderly and those with pre‑existing medical conditions.
* Minimise physical contact as much as is practicable, for example no shaking hands, no walking out with player mascots, no pre- or post-match celebrations and no celebrating between players during the match.
* If you are playing sport or swimming, shower with soap before attending the facility.
* If you are not playing the sport (for example you are a spectator or coach) ensure a distance of 1.5 metres is kept between yourself and others.
* Restrict access to change rooms solely to players, officials, coaches and essential staff.
* Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces regularly, including change room surfaces.
* Do not share items like towels and soap bars and wash your hands after changing.
* Reduce sporting activities to local competitions only, with no inter-district, or inter-club travel.
* If you swim in a well-maintained swimming pool, minimise time spent out of the pool and in the change rooms.
* Display education materials that can be downloaded and printed from the DHHS website <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus> .
* Take personal action to reduce exposures and stay healthy, as outlined see above.

## Actions for people caring for a sick family member

If you care for a sick family member with flu-like symptoms, take these actions:

* Care for the sick person in a single room.
* Keep the door closed and windows open where possible.
* Keep the number of carers to a minimum.
* Always use hand sanitiser before and after entering the room, or wash hands with soap and water.
* Keep the sick person’s crockery and utensils separate to the rest of the household.
* If available, wear a surgical mask (single-use face mask) when you are in the sick person’s room.
* Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces regularly.
* Dispose of tissues and masks in a sealed plastic bag and put in the usual household waste.
* If your family member becomes unwell, get medical help by calling your doctor (GP) or the coronavirus hotline on **1800 675 398**.
* If the unwell person is advised to visit the doctor or hospital, use a private car driven by the person or an existing close contact. Do not call an ambulance or use a bus, tram, train, taxi or uber.
* For serious symptoms, such as difficulty breathing, dial 000 and ask for an ambulance, advising the operator of the sick person’s condition.

## Actions for parents and guardians

If you are a parent or guardian, take the following actions:

* If your child/young person is unwell, do not send them to childcare or school.
* Consider whether your child/young person’s out-of-school activities are essential.
* Prepare for your child, young person to study at home should this become necessary.
* Plan for the possibility of your child/young person not attending childcare or school because of any future closure or because they are unwell. Discuss with your employer if needed.
* If your child/young person’s institution is closed, monitor their whereabouts, keep them at home, and prevent them from group meetings of their friends / classmates.
* If your child or young person is unwell, keep them away from elderly grandparents and people with underlying medical conditions.
* If your child or young person is regularly cared for by grandparents or elderly family members, consider alternative options to prevent the transmission of illness.
* Consider whether your family’s holiday plans are essential.

## Actions for organisations, workplaces or employers

Organisations and employers who are responsible for a workplace or venue should start to take actions now to reduce the risk of transmission of coronavirus. This includes any venue, such as a school, university, office building or any workplace. These actions should include:

* Cancel all international travel plans.
* Do not hold non-essential indoor gatherings of 100 or more people such as conferences, ceremonies, assemblies or celebrations. This is a directive by the Victorian Chief Health Officer and Victorian Government.
* Do not hold non-essential outdoor gatherings of 500 or more people such as trade exhibitions, ceremonies, assemblies or celebrations. This is a directive by the Victorian Chief Health Officer and Victorian Government.
* Cancel non-essential activities such as domestic business travel, study visits, extra-curricular activities and sporting events.
* Plan ways to enable physical distancing of 1.5m to reduce in-person contact for both staff and clients.
* In an enclosed space there should be on average no more than one person per four square metres of floor space.
* Encourage flexible working arrangements including working from home and off-peak travel.
* Purchase supplies to help limit infection, for example alcohol sanitisers and soap.
* Provide and promote sanitisers for use on entering buildings.
* Increase routine environmental cleaning.
* Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces regularly, including desks, keyboards and change room surfaces.
* In a change room, do not share items like towels and soap bars, and wash your hands after changing.
* Open windows, enhance airflow, adjust air conditioning.
* Promote preventive actions amongst your staff – lead by example.
* Ensure the highest hygiene practices among food handlers and canteen staff
* Where possible, avoid large indoor meetings and lunchrooms and use outdoor venues.
* Actively encourage sick employees to stay home.
* Plan for increased levels of staff absences.
* Plan for what to do if staff arrive sick at work – e.g. identify an isolation room or separated area.
* Venues with high volumes of movement of people such as shopping centres should take all the measures required at any workplace and should focus on environmental cleaning.
* Display education materials that can be downloaded and printed from the DHHS website: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>
* Keep staff informed of the actions you are taking.

## Actions for childcare centres, kindergartens and schools

The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) met recently to consider the issue of school closures in relation to the community transmission of COVID-19. The Committee’s current advice as of 21 March is that childcare, kindergartens and schools should remain open and closure will not prevent community transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

It’s important for children to try to keep things as normal as possible. These settings should take the following actions now:

* Do not hold outdoor events that exceed 500 if they involve attendance by community members who are not students or staff, for example sporting events. This is a directive by the Victorian Chief Health Officer and Victorian Government.
* Do not hold indoor events that exceed 100 if they involve attendance by community members who are not students or staff, for example assemblies, graduations, special events. This is a directive by the Victorian Chief Health Officer and Victorian Government.
* Take all the actions listed above under *Actions for an organisation, workplace or venue*.
* Consider whether any activities can be postponed, reduced in size/frequency or replaced.
* Cancel non-essential group activities such as study visits, extra-curricular activities, camps and sporting events.
* Actively encourage sick children/students and staff to stay at home.
* Direct and supervise preventive actions such as good hand washing before and after eating food, either through washing hands with soap and water, or use of hand sanitiser by students according to need.
* Encourage physical distancing, for example avoid large indoor meetings and lunchrooms, use outdoor venues.
* Prepare for students and staff to study/work from home if required.
* Consider staggering student breaks to limit movements and contacts between student/class groups.
* Increase routine environmental cleaning. Clean and disinfect high touch services regularly.
* Ensure the highest hygiene practices among food handlers and canteen staff.
* Identify a space that can be used to isolate students and staff who become sick.
* Alert your agency or department about large increases in student and staff absenteeism due to flu-like illnesses.
* Display education materials that can be downloaded and printed from the DHHS website: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>
* Keep students, parents and staff informed of the actions you are taking.
* Boarding schools and parents should consider the risks versus the benefits of a student remaining.
* Boarding schools should implement a plan to identify students who have respiratory symptoms or fever and isolate these individuals as quickly as possible.

## Actions for TAFE, colleges and universities

While there is no current requirement for higher education to close, all campuses should take the following actions now:

* Do not hold outdoor events that exceed 500 if they involve attendance by community members who are not students or staff, for example sporting events. This is a directive by the Victorian Chief Health Officer and Victorian Government.
* Do not hold indoor events that exceed 100 if they involve attendance by community members who are not students or staff, for example assemblies, graduations, special events. This is a directive by the Victorian Chief Health Officer and Victorian Government.
* Take all the actions listed above under *Actions for an organisation, workplace or venue*.
* Cancel non-essential group activities such as study visits, extra-curricular activities, camps and sporting events.
* Provide access to online content remotely and participate in as many other classes as possible by audio-visual link or other remote means.
* Ensure lectures and examinations have no more than one person per four square metres of floor space and have fewer than 100 persons.
* Continue to support clinical placements if the necessary risk assessments have been undertaken, after discussion with clinical supervisors and facilities.
* Actively encourage sick students and staff to stay at home.
* Encourage personal hygiene, such as use of hand sanitiser by students at entry points.
* Limit movements and contacts between student/class groups.
* Increase routine environmental cleaning.
* Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces regularly, including desks and keyboards.
* Ensure the highest hygiene practices among food handlers and canteen staff.
* Implement a plan to identify students who have respiratory symptoms or fever and isolate these individuals as quickly as possible.
* Identify a space that can be used to isolate students and staff who become sick.
* Student halls, residential colleges and students should consider the risks versus the benefits of a student remaining, noting that the duration of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is likely to span more than six months.
* Student halls and residential colleges should implement a plan to identify students who have respiratory symptoms or fever and isolate these individuals as quickly as possible.
* Universities and higher education centres should consider closing or reducing accommodation densities.
* Display education materials that can be downloaded and printed from the DHHS website: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>
* Keep students and staff informed of the actions you are taking.

## Actions for health services, emergency services and community service providers

Health services, emergency services and community service providers should now:

* Take all the actions listed above under *Actions for an organisation, workplace or venue*.
* Limit non-essential meetings of critical workforces such as healthcare workers and emergency service workers.
* Consider whether your service can be limited or reduced to avoid community contact in the best interests of your clients.
* Consider whether your activities can be adjusted to enable separation of clients, and avoid queuing and close confines.
* Stop travel of clients, staff and volunteers for anything but vital care/emergency responses.
* **Consider the needs of older adults, persons with disabilities, and others with access and functional needs in your response**.
* Display education materials that can be downloaded and printed from the DHHS website: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>
* Keep staff, volunteers and clients informed of the actions you are taking.

## Actions for residential aged care facilities

While all respiratory viruses can cause outbreaks and significant morbidity and mortality, coronavirus (COVID-19) is acknowledged as a significant health risk, particularly for the elderly and those with co-morbidities or low immunity.

Providers of residential aged care facilities should now:

* Take all the actions listed above under *Actions for an organisation, workplace or venue*.
* Take all the actions listed above under *Actions for health services, emergency services and community service providers*.
* Ensure that facilities are prepared to manage outbreaks of coronavirus (COVID-19). Detailed guidance can be found at: https://www.health.gov.au
* Do not permit visitors or staff to enter the facility who:
  + have returned from overseas in the last 14 days
  + have been in contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the last 14 days
  + have fever or symptoms of acute respiratory infection
  + from 1 May 2020, have not been vaccinated against influenza.
* Require visitors and staff to provide details of symptoms consistent with coronavirus (COVID-19).
* Do not permit large group visits or gatherings, including social activities or entertainment.
* Do not permit school group visits of any size.
* Only allow children aged 16 years or less to visit by exception.
* Limit visits to a short duration.
* Limit visits to a maximum of two visitors at one time per day (for example family members, close friends or professional service or advocacy).
* Require visits to be conducted in a resident’s room, outdoors, or in a specific area rather than communal areas.
* Encourage visitors to practice social distancing practices where possible, including maintaining a distance of 1.5 metres.
* Ensure phone or video calls are accessible to all residents to enable more regular communication with family members.
* Encourage family and friends to maintain contact with residents by phone and social media as appropriate.
* Do not hold external excursions for residents.
* Actively screen for symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) in residents being admitted or readmitted.
* Do not admit residents with coronavirus (COVID-19) compatible symptoms.
* Ensure all visitors, staff and residents undertake personal preventive actions, especially regular hand washing with soap and water.
* Train staff on recognising the early signs and symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) in themselves, colleagues, residents and visitors.
* Provide sanitising hand rub dispensers in prominent places, particularly entry or high use areas such as a registration desk, change rooms, toilets or kiosk. Make sure dispensers are regularly refilled.
* Keep residents, family members, staff and volunteers informed of the actions you are taking.

## Actions for transport carriers

The following actions should be considered by transport providers, including airplanes, trains, trams, buses, taxis and uber:

* Actively encourage travellers arriving from overseas to self-isolate for 14 days at home or in an hotel.
* Take all the actions listed above under *Actions for an organisation, workplace or venue*.
* Provide and promote sanitisers for use on entering buildings, where available.
* Consider whether your transport service can be adjusted to increase separation of travellers and avoid queuing.
* Plan ways to reduce in-person contact for travellers and staff.
* Actively encourage sick passengers to stay at home.
* Open windows and adjust air conditioning to increase airflow.
* Ensure the highest hygiene practices among food handlers and canteen staff if relevant.
* Increase environmental cleaning. Clean and disinfect high touch services regularly.
* Airlines should ensure appropriate cleaning and disinfection activities are undertaken between each flight.
* Use advertising space and announcements to support public health messages around coronavirus (COVID-19).
* Plan what to do if a passenger or staff member becomes ill. For airlines see: [https://www.health.gov.au/](https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/03/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-airline-industry-including-flight-crew_2.pdf)
* Keep staff and travellers informed of the actions you are taking.
* For drivers of public transport, including taxis, uber, ride-hail services, trains, buses and trams:
  + you do not need to wear a mask if you are healthy
  + if you are unwell do not go to work
  + ask passengers to sit behind you to achieve as much separation as is reasonably possible
  + employ standard cleaning practices at the end of each shift, as part of good hygiene practice
  + use your discretion about reducing the risk of transmission.
  + If a passenger spreads droplets (such as sneezing, coughing or vomiting), clean surfaces with appropriate disinfectant wipes so that the potential spread of infection can be minimised.
* Any passenger with a suspected case of coronavirus (COVID-19), or who has travelled through an at-risk country, has been advised to wear a surgical mask to prevent spreading the virus. If an unwell person is advised to visit the doctor or hospital, they are advised to use a private car driven by the person or an existing close contact. They are advised not to use a bus, tram, train, taxi or uber.

## Further information and resources

Please check the [DHHS coronavirus website](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus) at [www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus](http://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus) regularly for updates. Additional information is available at [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au). Further advice on specific occupational groups may also be available.

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