
VIRAL INFECTION WITH CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

PATIENT INFORMATION



WHAT IS COVID-19?

COVID-19 is an infection due to the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The infection affects the lungs, but can cause other symptoms too. While some people have very mild illness there are others that develop more severe illness. A minority of people with COVID-19 become sick enough to need care in hospital.

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO WHEN DIAGNOSED WITH COVID-19?

If you have tested positive for infection with COVID-19 it is important to isolate from other people at home for at least five days and until you have no symptoms. This will reduce community spread of the virus as well as protect family and friends from catching this infection from you. Below are details regarding symptoms and how to manage them at home, and when to seek follow up care should you need further medical assessment and help.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19?

COVID-19 mainly affects the lungs, but can cause other symptoms too. While most people develop a fever and cough, some people have different symptoms. COVID-19 symptoms can include:

- Cough, sore throat, runny nose, sneezing
- Fever (sweating, shivering, chills)
- Abdominal cramps and diarrhoea
- Nausea and vomiting
- Feeling unwell and more tired (lethargy)
- Fast or difficult breathing or feeling short of breath
- Chest pain and generalised muscle aches in arms and legs (myalgias)
- Blue colour around the lips (cyanosis)
- Headaches
- Loss of normal taste and smell

A child may develop tiredness or be more irritable. Older persons may become confused, have falls or a worsening of chronic medical conditions.

HOME CARE

For most people, COVID-19 infections do not need any special care. Taking time to rest and use of medications for pain and fever such as paracetamol and/or ibuprofen may help with symptoms. There are a range of antiviral medications recommended in the early phase of infection with COVID-19 for patients who are at risk of progression to severe disease. Check with your GP for recommendations that apply to your own health needs.

HOW LONG AM I CONSIDERED INFECTIOUS WITH COVID-19?

In general, studies have shown that a person who tests positive for COVID-19 may be infectious for up to 10 days but are most infectious in the 2 days just before their symptoms start, and whilst they are experiencing symptoms - such as runny nose, sore throat, cough and fever. People who are immunocompromised or have severe illness may have prolonged infectious periods.

CHILDREN INFECTED WITH COVID-19

Most children who get COVID-19 have a mild infection that resembles a common cold or flu. Symptoms usually last between two to seven days. Some children may show no signs or symptoms of a COVID-19 infection in which case they do not require any specific treatment. If your child is diagnosed with COVID-19 and has symptoms, you may treat them as you would with any cold or flu. This might include:

- Encouraging fluids and rest
- Paracetamol and/or Ibuprofen
- Saline drops for a blocked nose
- Infants may need to feed smaller amounts, more frequently

While COVID-19 can be a serious illness for older people, in children the infection is usually mild and the need to stay in hospital is rare. Children with chronic illness (such as heart or lung disease, neurological problems, or obesity) may become more unwell from COVID-19.

Very occasionally children can develop an immune-based reaction after COVID-19 infection. This appears as a new illness, two to six weeks after having COVID-19. Symptoms can include feeling unwell with rash, red eyes (conjunctivitis), abdominal pain and fever. If your child develops these symptoms you should seek further medical assessment.

Long COVID

Long COVID refers to long-term symptoms that some people experience after they have had COVID-19. It is a chronic condition that can affect many body systems. Symptoms can include fatigue, shortness of breath, chest pain, headaches and cognitive dysfunction.

People with Long COVID will have unique experiences, including how long symptoms will last. People with Long COVID will also have differing disease management and support needs. Evidence about Long COVID is evolving - there is not one specific treatment or medication to treat Long COVID, but when symptoms are having a big impact on your life you may be referred to a specialist to help manage your symptoms and help you recover.

SEEKING HELP

Cabrini Emergency Department (ED) is staffed by experienced emergency doctors and nurses 24 hours a day 7 days per week. If you have any questions about your ED treatment our qualified ED staff can be contacted on (03) 9508 1500 at any time. If you need to return to Cabrini ED for ongoing care we would be glad to take care of you again and if this occurs within a week of your initial consultation the doctor's fee will be bulk-billed.

You can expect to receive a phone call or SMS message from one of our emergency nurses the day after you have been discharged. The nurse will be able to clarify any aspect of your diagnosis, treatment, or follow-up.

In a medical emergency return to Cabrini ED if it is safe to do so or go to the nearest hospital emergency department or call an ambulance - dial triple zero (000).

Call for help if you:

- Feel very short of breath
- Are too short of breath to manage essential activities (such as getting around the house, eating, going to the toilet, sleeping)
- Become dizzy when you stand
- Become confused or drowsy - for children this includes being very sleepy, difficult to wake
- Are not managing at home
- Have severe chest or abdominal pain that doesn't go away after pain relief
- Have had a persistent fever lasting more than five days, or a fever in a baby under three months of age

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

- Visit the Victorian Coronavirus Website at www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus
- Visit the Royal Children's Hospital Kids Health Information at www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/fact_sheets/Coronavirus_COVID-19/
- Ask your local doctor or healthcare professional