

Quarantine and Isolation

Fact sheet for prisoners

What is coronavirus (COVID-19)?

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a virus. You can get it by having close face-to-face contact with an infected person, or from people sharing the same household. The virus is spread by infected people coughing, sneezing, or touching and contaminating some surfaces. That's why the best way to protect yourself and others is to practice good personal hygiene.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms can include loss or changes in sense of smell or taste, fever, chills or sweats, cough, sore throat, headache, muscle soreness, stuffy nose, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea, fatigue or tiredness and shortness of breath. If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, tell a staff member straight away so you can be checked by the healthcare team. Some people might not have any symptoms at all.

Who is most at risk of COVID-19?

Anybody can contract COVID-19 - even people who have been vaccinated, which is why everyone entering custody is placed in a quarantine area for 10 days as a safety precaution.

People who have had close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 have the highest risk of infection. Close contact means spending as few as 15 minutes together face-to-face or sharing a closed space, like a room or a car.

Many people will suffer only mild symptoms; however, some groups are at a higher risk of experiencing severe symptoms. These groups include the elderly and people with underlying illnesses that make them more vulnerable to respiratory disease - including those with diabetes, chronic lung disease, kidney failure and people with suppressed immune systems.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are a high-risk group for coronavirus (COVID-19) due to higher rates of pre-existing medical conditions.

Management of COVID-19

Quarantine of prisoners whose COVID-19 status is unconfirmed, as well as isolation of prisoners who are COVID-19 positive, are essential strategies to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in correctional facilities.

We know that quarantining is difficult and may cause stress for you. Corrections Victoria will only require you to quarantine for the minimum period recommended by our health experts, to keep you and the prison community safe.

Why do I have to quarantine following arrival in prison?

You are placed in a protective quarantine or quarantine area to prevent the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

If you are a new prisoner, you are at risk of bringing coronavirus (COVID-19) with you. You might spread the virus to other prisoners or prison staff, even if you do not realise you are sick.

If you have a child coming into prison to reside with you, there is a risk your child may bring coronavirus (COVID-19) in with them.

Everyone plays an important role in stopping the spread of the virus, and decisions are being made in line with the latest medical and health advice.

The kind of quarantine, and time to be spent there, is based on a risk-assessment that considers vaccination status, test results, and likely exposure to COVID-19 (e.g. if entering custody from a high-risk setting).

Quarantine for suspected cases of COVID-19

Quarantine for suspected cases of COVID-19 is in place at every prison to isolate prisoners who health staff have classified as a suspected case of COVID-19, until a positive or negative COVID-19 diagnosis has been confirmed. All prisoners entering custody will initially be accommodated in quarantine, after completion of the reception assessment process.

Protective Quarantine

Newly received prisoners may transfer from quarantine to protective quarantine, depending on the results of tests undertaken while they are in quarantine.

Transfer Quarantine

Based on expert health advice, Transfer Quarantine is in place if you return from certain settings to prevent the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Isolation for confirmed cases of COVID-19

Isolation areas are in place at designated prisons to accommodate, treat and manage confirmed COVID-19 cases until they have recovered. Confirmed cases will have their health needs met within the isolation area, unless their condition requires closer monitoring and care, at which point they will be transferred to a sub-acute unit or other appropriate health facility.

How long will I be required to quarantine for?

The amount of time you will be required to quarantine will range from three to 14 days, depending on the type of quarantine you are placed in. The health care team will confirm you are safe to leave the quarantine area once you have returned the final required PCR test or Rapid Antigen test (RAT) and received a negative result.

Why am I being asked to get tested?

Testing for COVID-19 helps to keep prisoners and prison staff safe, by identifying anyone who has the virus at an early stage before it has a chance to spread. You will be asked to be tested at several stages during your time in quarantine.

The test involves looking for evidence of the virus in samples, usually collected from the back of your throat and nose. The test itself usually just involves a swab being taken and generally takes less than a minute.

Typically, it takes 24-72 hours for people to get their results after they are PCR tested and 15 minutes for results for Rapid Antigen Tests. Sometimes there can be delays and it can take longer. The health care team will notify you of your results when they are available.

If you test negative, you will continue to be tested on the scheduled days for your specific quarantine requirements. This is because even if

you have been infected, the test could be negative if the virus is still incubating in your body.

If you test positive at any stage, in any of the quarantine settings, you will be moved into a COVID-19 isolation area. This is to keep you safe. The health care team will monitor and care for you during your illness.

Additional quarantine requirement for refusal of last day test (quarantine requirement can end earlier if you consent to test)

Quarantine type	Additional requirement
Quarantine for suspected case(s)	5 days
Protective quarantine for new receptions	5 days
Transfer Quarantine from:	
Settings where community contact is controlled and monitored: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• short* hospital and medical appointments• short* family visits• outside work experience• outside community visits• Judy Lazarus Transition Centre	5 days
Settings where community contact is variable and/or unmonitored: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prolonged emergency department, hospital and medical appointments and admissions• In-person court appearances• Funeral attendance• Extensive community visits or indoor work experience• Thomas Embling Hospital	9 days
Settings with no community contact: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Youth Justice• Other inter-prison transfers	11 days

Quarantine arrangements for new receptions

Where will I complete my quarantine period?

Protective quarantine and quarantine areas have been established at five prisons – the Melbourne Assessment Prison, Metropolitan Remand Centre, Port Phillip Prison, Ravenhall Correctional Centre and Dame Phyllis Frost Centre. Existing prisoners who are currently accommodated or who transfer to these prisons, do not have access to these areas.



Prevention of COVID-19

You may be offered a vaccine by prison health services during quarantine. The COVID-19 vaccine is safe, effective, and voluntary. Getting vaccinated helps protect your family and your community. One of the main benefits of vaccination is that it reduces the severity of illness if you later contract COVID-19. You will need three doses (vaccinations) according to current health advice. If you have concerns about your health and getting a COVID-19 vaccine, talk to prison health services

Transfer Quarantine

What is a transfer quarantine area?

A transfer quarantine area is a dedicated area for transferred prisoners, to reduce the risk of spreading coronavirus (COVID-19) in Victorian prisons.

Why am I in transfer quarantine?

You are being placed in transfer quarantine to prevent the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Transfer quarantine applies on return from locations that have active contact outside the corrections system, for example:

- all medical appointments (including outpatient appointments, in-patient hospital admissions and emergency department attendances, with no minimum time limit on attendance)
- all in-person court appearances
- Judy Lazarus Transition Centre
- Youth Justice to prison
- Thomas Embling Hospital - **all** units including Apsley
- inter-prison transfers (not between Loddon and Middleton)
- Funeral attendance

The number of days you will need to spend in Transfer Quarantine will depend on where you are transferring to/from.. Corrections Victoria staff will tell you how many days you need to complete and when you need to be tested.

If there is an outbreak in a prison, a longer transfer quarantine requirement may be applied – based on health advice at that time.

If you have recently returned from hospital or an in-person court appearance, you are at risk of bringing coronavirus (COVID-19) with you. You might spread the virus to other prisoners or prison staff, even if you do not realise you are sick.

If you have elective surgery, the hospital may require that you serve a period of quarantine before you attend the hospital.

Everyone plays an important role in stopping the spread of the virus, and decisions are being made in line with the latest medical and health advice.

Refer to the table on page 5 for Quarantine duration.

Quarantine for suspected cases of COVID-19

What is a quarantine area?

A quarantine area is a dedicated area for prisoners suspected of having COVID-19 and awaiting results. All prisons across Victoria have quarantine areas.

Why am I being quarantined?

You are being quarantined and isolated as you are suspected of having COVID-19. COVID-19 is spread from person to person, and it is important that we protect the health and safety of other prisoners and prison staff whilst allowing you to receive the care and treatment you require.

Everyone plays an important role in stopping the spread of the virus, and decisions are being made in line with the latest medical and health advice.

How long will I be quarantined for?

You will remain in quarantine for 10 days, until your final test results are returned, and the prison's health team confirms you are safe to leave.

What if I test positive to COVID-19?

Your health and the health of other prisoners and prison staff is our biggest concern. If it is confirmed you have COVID-19, you will be moved to an isolation area.



Isolation for confirmed cases of COVID-19

What is an Isolation area?

An isolation area is a dedicated area for the physical isolation and health care for prisoners with COVID-19. Isolation areas are at designated prisons across Victoria.

How long will I be isolated for?

Your time in isolation will allow you to be closely monitored, and quickly receive the care you need. You will remain in isolation for 10 days or until the prison healthcare team confirms you are safe to leave.

What care will I receive in isolation?

The isolation area will be staffed 24 hours a day and staff will regularly monitor your physical and mental health and wellbeing. This will include checking on your symptoms and helping you to manage them.

If you require additional medical attention (for example, if your symptoms are getting worse) or mental health support, please use your cell intercom to let a staff member know. They will notify the health team, who will review you and ensure you are receiving the care you need. Will I be able to leave my cell in transfer quarantine, protective quarantine, quarantine or isolation?

Your ability to leave your cell will be limited and only occur if this can be safely managed.

If you have a confirmed case of COVID-19, you may be able to mix with prisoners who also have COVID-19 within the isolation area. This is because there is no risk of you infecting one another.

What about meals, visits and activities to keep me occupied?

All meals will be provided to you in your cell. New receptions who are completing their quarantine period and prisoners in transfer quarantine will receive an allocation of canteen items, which will be delivered to their cell. You will also be able to purchase additional items from the canteen and these will be delivered to your cell.

You have access to a television and kettle in your cell, and an activity pack including books and other materials.

Professional visits, including with your lawyer, will take place through phone or video calls.

If you are suspected or confirmed as having COVID-19, you will not be able to attend court appearances in person, unless absolutely necessary, or until the prison's health team determines it is safe for you to do so.

How can I contact my family or friends?

Family and social connection is important, and we want to do what we can to make sure you are able to speak to and communicate with them.

While you are in protective quarantine, quarantine or isolation, you will have access to in-cell phone calls, and we are also encouraging you and your family or friends to write letters.

What support is available to me?

Prison and health staff, including Aboriginal Wellbeing Officers and specialist mental health services, will regularly check in and monitor the health and wellbeing of all prisoners, including vulnerable and high-risk people.

Forensic Intervention Services will provide support to all prisoners subject to quarantine arrangements following reception, and those confirmed to have COVID-19 who are in isolation. The Protective Quarantine Support (PQS) team provide four (4) brief supportive counselling sessions which are focused on transition and managing distress and wellbeing. Your engagement is optional, and you can decline the service and reengage at any time during your quarantine/isolation period.

Forensicare and primary health service providers will continue to provide mental health support, support for prisoners in prison for the first time, and an early intervention service to support prisoners who may not fall into any of these categories.

Managing your mental health

We know that this situation is difficult and may cause stress for you.

You are encouraged to maintain contact with people who can support you, for example writing



to or calling your family and friends. You can also request to see medical staff if you are not coping.

There are a number of ways to support your mental health during this time:

- engage in healthy activities that you enjoy and find relaxing, such as meditation.
- keep regular sleep routines.
- try to maintain some physical activity if you feel well enough
- establish routines as best possible