

FAQs for schools (Tier 1 information)

August 2021

OFFICIAL

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Frequently Asked Questions

Key Information

- Your school has been identified as a Tier 1 site.
- All staff and students at the school are classified as Primary Close Contacts.
- All staff and students, and their household members must isolate at home for 14 days, even if they have no symptoms.
- All Primary Close Contacts must get tested immediately.
- Household members should monitor for symptoms and get tested as soon as they develop.
- Financial and other support is available for you.
- You may receive a phone call from a private number. Please answer this as it is likely to be a member of the Health team to discuss your situation.

Isolating at home

Q: Who needs to isolate at home?

A: The Local Public Health Unit and the Victorian Department of Health require all staff, students to get tested and isolate at home for 14 days from the last day they were at the site or until otherwise advised.

Q: Can I leave my house for any reason?

A: To ensure your safety and minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission everyone in your household must stay at home (inside the home) for 14 days, except:

- to get urgent medical care
- to get tested for COVID-19
- in an emergency

- if you or your children are escaping harm or are at risk of harm from family violence – you should also call Safe Steps on 1800 015 188 or email safesteps@safesteps.org.au for help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Q: Why are people being asked to isolate at home?

A: Tier 1 sites have a high risk of transmission of COVID-19. There is a risk that, at any time during the isolation period, a Primary Close Contact may develop COVID-19, even if they have had an initial negative test.

Q: Do household members usually go into isolation as well?

A: Yes. They are classed as secondary close contacts and must isolate for the 14 days.

Q: Why are household members told to isolate (secondary close contacts)?

A: Because COVID-19 is highly infectious and can be transmitted without symptoms or before symptoms, the Department of Health requires household members of Primary Close Contacts to isolate. This means that if they catch COVID-19 from their family member they would not be able to spread it further.

Q: Can I have visitors to my home?

A: No. This includes visitors in your front or backyard, as well as tradespeople (like plumbers or electricians).

Q: I am fully vaccinated. Do I still need to isolate for 14 days?

A: Yes. You (and anyone you live with) must stay at home for 14 days, even if you are fully vaccinated.

Whilst vaccination is very important for stopping you from getting very sick from COVID-19, it does not completely prevent the risk of catching the virus or passing it on to others.

Q: Do I need to isolate for 14 days even if I get a negative test result?

A: Yes. Your institution is a Tier 1 exposure site. You (and anyone you live with in the same household) must stay at home for 14 days, even if you get a negative test result.

There is a risk that, at any time during the isolation period, a primary close contact may develop COVID-19 and unknowingly pass the infection to their household, even if they have had an initial negative test.

Q: My child was absent from school on the dates of the exposure – do we still need to isolate?

A: Yes – there are potentially multiple days of exposure so all staff and students currently are classed as primary close contacts.

Q: Can I leave home to buy food/groceries while I am in isolation?

A: No. If you can get your groceries delivered, this is the best option. Make sure anyone dropping off food or groceries drops them at your door, and you do not open the door while they are there or speak to them in person.

Q: How will I know when I have finished my 14 days in isolation?

A: The Victorian Department of Health will contact you to let you know when you can leave your home. The primary close contact (PCC) will need a negative test result on Day 13 and a formal letter from the Department of Health before you will be allowed to leave your home.

Q: What will happen next?

A: Public Health Units and the Victorian Department of Health will contact Primary Close Contacts and their households in the coming days. During these calls, isolation is explained, your isolation dates will be confirmed, and information is given regarding access to support.

Q: How can I get further information?

A: The Victorian Department of Health has information available in many different languages:
<https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/translated-information-about-coronavirus-covid-19>

For further information and support, please contact the Coronavirus Hotline on 1300 651 160 (24 hours).

Testing

Q: Does everyone in my household need to get tested?

A: Only Primary Close Contacts (those identified as having been exposed to someone with COVID at a Tier 1 exposure site) need to get tested.

The remainder of the household should carefully monitor for symptoms and get tested as soon as these develop.

Q: Why should I get tested if I don't have symptoms?

A: Unfortunately, you might still be COVID-positive even if you have no symptoms. Everyone responds to the virus differently – some fall very ill and even die, and others remain completely asymptomatic, but can infect others who become very ill or die. Please get tested even if you have no symptoms.

Q: What if I have symptoms and need to get a test?

A: You are able to leave your home to get a test during isolation, but it is important that you take steps to minimise the risk to others when doing so. There are a few ways you can get tested safely while you have symptoms:

- If you are able to travel by private vehicle, please do so. Please wear a mask while you are out of the house, and make sure you perform hand hygiene before you leave your home.
- If you are not able to drive in a private vehicle, you can walk to a testing site as long as you can do so without entering any communal (shared) indoor areas (like lifts, foyers, stairwells) while there are other people present. Please wear a mask while you are out of the house, and make sure you perform hand hygiene before you leave your home.
- If you cannot attend a testing site in either of the above ways, then **you may be eligible for an in-home test**. Please call the Coronavirus hotline on 1300 651 160.

Q: Is there an alternative to nasal and throat swab testing?

A: Nasal & throat swab testing is the only testing method recommended for diagnosing COVID-19.

Q: Do I need to show my test results to the school?

A: No. Your test results will not be shared with anyone except the Victorian Department of Health.

Q: Do I need to have another test after the first one?

A: Yes. COVID-19 can take up to two weeks to develop in the body and result in a positive test after exposure. Even if you have tested negative now, you may later test positive. That is why you are encouraged to test at the start of your 14-day isolation and again at the end on day 13.

All Primary Close Contacts must be tested on day 13. You will not be released from isolation on day 14 without a negative test result.

Financial and Mental Health Support

Q: Can I apply for financial assistance (isolation payments)?

A: You can apply for financial assistance online once the Public Health Unit or the Victorian Department of Health have given you written advice as a primary close contact.

A one-off \$1,500 payment is available to support eligible Victorian workers who have COVID-19 or are a close contact of someone confirmed to have COVID-19.

For more information on the Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment, visit <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/pandemic-leave-disaster-payment>.

Information on additional financial support for coronavirus (COVID-19) is available from <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/financial-and-other-support-coronavirus-covid-19>.

Q: What about those who can't claim the \$1500 Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment? What help is available?

A: Information on financial support payments and eligibility are provided below. Please apply for only one type of payment during each time period.

Q: What financial support is available to me?

A: There are a range of different financial supports you can access, depending on your personal situation. All links and information can be found on the Coronavirus website: <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/financial-and-other-support-coronavirus-covid-19>.

A summary of some key supports is provided below.

Worker support payments for lost income

➤ **\$450 Test Isolation Payment**

Eligibility:

- If you have been tested for COVID-19 or are the guardian or carer of someone who has been tested;
- Are unable to work due to requirement to isolate after a test;
- Have used up your sick or carers leave entitlements;
- Are not receiving Australian Government income support such as JobKeeper;
- Provide evidence of your identity, your work rights and your employment;
- Follow the public health directions for your isolation.
- You can only claim for one test within a 30-day period unless you have been directed by the Department of Health to have more than one test in that period.

Applications: online via the Victorian Government's Coronavirus website:

<https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/450-coronavirus-covid-19-test-isolation-payment>

Help: If you need help applying, you can call the Coronavirus Hotline on 1800 675 398 and select option 4, then 4 again. If you need an interpreter, call TIS National on 131 450.

➤ **\$1500 Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment**

Eligibility:

- If you are a positive COVID-19 case or close contact, or a carer for a child or person who is a positive COVID-19 case, or you have been identified as a Tier 1 exposure site contact;
- You have the right to work in Australia;
- You have been unable to go to work;
- Have used up your sick or carers' leave entitlements;
- Both members of a couple can claim separately.

Applications: via Services Australia (Centrelink)

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/pandemic-leave-disaster-payment-victoria>

➤ **\$600 or \$375 COVID-19 Disaster Payment**

Eligibility:

- If you have been impacted by a COVID-19 lockdown, hotspot, or period of restricted movement
- You have the right to work in Australia;
- You have lost income for a full day's work or more due to restrictions;
- Have used up your sick or carers leave entitlements;
- You are not receiving income support, ABSTUDY, dad or partner or parental leave pay;
- You are not claiming the \$1500 Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment, or a Victorian State pandemic payment, or small business payment for the same time period.
- Both members of a couple can claim separately.

Applications: via Services Australia (Centrelink)

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/covid-19-disaster-payment-victoria>

Other financial supports

➤ **\$800 Extreme Hardship Support Payment**

Eligibility:

- You live in Victoria,
- You are **not** able to access Commonwealth income support (including Job Seeker, SRSS, or the COVID-19 Disaster Payment)
- you have **zero income or very limited savings** (under \$2000 per person)
- You are a temporary or provisional visa holder (such as an international student) or an undocumented migrant.

Applications: via the Australian Red Cross <https://www.redcross.org.au/vicrelief>

Food support

Food relief packages are available. For more information, call the Coronavirus Hotline on 1800 675 398. If you need an interpreter, please press 0 when you call the hotline. Select 4, then 4 again for support.

Please note that all teams are experiencing a period of high demand.

While we will work to have your needs met as soon as possible, some deliveries may occur the following day.

Additional crisis payments for people already receiving income assistance (Centrelink)

➤ **Crisis Payment for National Health Emergency (COVID-19)**

Eligibility:

- You must be eligible for an income support payment or ABSTUDY living allowance;
- You are in severe financial hardship;
- You must apply within 14 days of starting isolation or caring for someone who is directed to isolate.

Applications: via Services Australia (Centrelink)

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/crisis-payment-national-health-emergency-covid-19>

➤ **\$250 Energy bill bonus**

Eligibility:

- You have a Victorian residential electricity account
- You are already receiving concessions (from Centrelink)
- This is a one-off payment per household.

Applications: via Victorian Energy <https://compare.energy.vic.gov.au/>

Q: What mental health supports are available to me?

A: The following links contain more information and may offer vital mental health support to you during this difficult time. Please do not hesitate to ask for help.

You can click on any of the links below for more support:

- Australian Government – [Looking after your mental health during COVID-19](#)
- Victorian Government – [Mental health resources – COVID-19](#)
- Beyond Blue – information advice and strategies:
Contact their hotline on **1800 512 348** or visit <https://coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au/>
- Victorian Transcultural Mental Health: [Mental health resources for multicultural communities](#)

If you are in crisis or need urgent mental health support, call Lifeline on **13 11 14**.