



COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS

WHAT TO DO IF YOU TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID-19 AND IS ASKED TO SELF-ISOLATE

This advice is intended for:

1. People with confirmed COVID-19, i.e. those with a positive laboratory test result – who have been asked to isolate at home
2. Those living in households with someone who has confirmed COVID-19

What does a positive laboratory test result mean?

Your healthcare provider took a specimen from you because you met the current criteria for testing. This specimen was sent to a laboratory. The laboratory tested your specimen for COVID-19. If your test was positive, you have confirmed COVID-19.

Who will be in touch with me from the government or the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD)?

Your healthcare provider (your GP or local clinic) is responsible for your care. However, you may be called, visited at home or otherwise contacted by government officials, community health workers or by the NICD. Once you have confirmed COVID-19, the purpose of this call or visit is to assess if your home environment is suitable for isolation, to assist you and members of your household to adhere to the home isolation recommendations and to monitor your illness. If you are visited at home, officials will wear personal protective equipment such as masks, gloves and aprons to prevent themselves from becoming infected, maintain a distance of 2 meters and will not enter your home, unless necessary. Visiting officials may provide a care pack to you (the contents of this pack will vary).

Your healthcare provider, government officials or NICD will also ask you to make a list of all the people you have had close contact with from 2 days before you became ill. These people will be required to self-quarantine at home for 14 days and monitor themselves for symptoms.

If I have a positive laboratory test result, am I at risk for more severe illness?

The laboratory test will not be able to tell you if you are at risk for more severe illness because the result is only positive or negative for COVID-19. However, your healthcare provider will assess your COVID-19 symptoms and your other risk factors for more severe illness (i.e. older age, serious underlying medical conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, lung disease and immunosuppression, etc.). If you were asked to isolate at home, your healthcare provider has assessed that you have a mild illness that can be managed at home, you have no/few risk factors for severe illness and your home environment is suitable for isolation. However, some people with COVID-19 may worsen at home and need admission to hospital. It is very important that you carefully monitor your symptoms throughout your illness and look out for emergency warning signs such as trouble breathing, chest pain or pressure in your chest that does not go away, coughing up blood, becoming confused, severe sleepiness, blue lips or face. Should any of these symptoms develop it will be important to seek healthcare immediately.

How do I care for myself at home?

Most people who get sick with COVID-19 will have only a mild illness and should recover at home. You may continue to experience the typical symptoms which include a fever, cough and mild shortness of breath. Most

people with mild illness will start feeling better within a week of first symptoms. Have your healthcare provider's contact information on hand for emergencies – this could be your GP or your nearest local clinic/ hospital.

Get rest at home and drink enough water/clear fluids during the day to make sure that your urine stays a pale clear colour. There are no specific antiviral treatments recommended for COVID-19. You can take over-the-counter medications if you have fever or pain. Use these according to the instructions on the packet or label and do not exceed the recommended dose. It is important to continue taking any other prescribed chronic medication as well.

Monitor your symptoms carefully. If your symptoms get worse, call your healthcare provider immediately. If you develop any emergency warning signs, get medical attention immediately. Emergency warning signs include: trouble breathing, chest pain or pressure in your chest that does not go away, coughing up blood, becoming confused, severe sleepiness, blue lips or face. If you have any warning signs, you or a member of your household should call your nearest hospital or emergency services immediately and notify them that you have confirmed COVID-19. Avoid taking public transport to the facility – either use private transport (preferably with windows rolled-down) or call emergency services for an ambulance if required.

Will other members of my household be tested for COVID-19?

Other members of your household (who are considered among your close contacts) should be on home quarantine and will need to monitor their symptoms for up to 14 days after your symptoms resolve. They will only have specimens collected for laboratory testing if they develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19.

Why have I been asked to isolate at home?

Staying at home will help to control the spread of COVID-19 to your friends, relatives and your wider community. In particular, staying at home will help prevent spread to the most vulnerable people in our communities, who are at risk for severe illness.

COVID-19 is spread by droplets. When an infected person coughs, exhales or sneezes, they release droplets of fluid containing the COVID-19 virus. Other people can become infected by breathing in these droplets if they are standing within a few meters from the infected person. The larger droplets can also fall on nearby surfaces and objects. The virus can survive on hard surfaces (plastic and stainless steel, for example) for up to 72 hours. Other people can become infected when they touch a contaminated surface, then touch their eyes, nose or mouth. People cannot be infected through the skin.

If you understand how coronavirus disease spreads, this will help you to understand how to prevent spreading the infection to others. Stay a few meters away from other people, wash your hands frequently and cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze.

What does my home isolation mean for me?

Stay at home. Do not go to work, school, or any public areas. If necessary, talk to your employer and let them know that you cannot come to work. Do not use any public transport (including buses, minibus taxis and taxi cabs). Do not travel. You should cancel all your routine medical and dental appointments. If possible, you should not even go out to buy food, medicines or other essentials. You should ask friends or relatives to help you to buy groceries and essentials. You should not go outside to exercise. You should not have any visitors in your home during your isolation period. Do keep in touch with your relatives, friends and colleagues over the phone, internet or by using social media.

What does my home isolation mean for other people who live in my household?

If you live with other people, as far as possible, you should stay in a separate "sick room" and away from other people in your household. If a separate sick room is not possible, try to keep to one area of your home, at least 2 meters (3 steps) away from other people. Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough with disposable face tissue. Dispose tissues into the waste bin in your sick room/area and then immediately wash your hands. Wash your hands regularly using soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitisers (containing at least 60% alcohol).

Clean your sick room/area every day, first using regular household soap and then after rinsing, using regular household disinfectant containing 0.5% sodium hypochlorite (make this using 1 part 5% bleach to 9 parts water). Do not share eating utensils, towels, bedding with others in your household.

If possible, use a separate bathroom. Clean and disinfect bathrooms at least once a day, first using regular household soap and then after rinsing, using regular household disinfectant containing 0.5% sodium hypochlorite (bleach).

Your laundry (clothes, bed linen, towels) should be placed in a laundry bag. Do not shake soiled laundry to avoid spreading the virus. Machine-wash laundry at 60-90°C with regular detergent. If machine washing is not possible, wash laundry using regular laundry soap and hot water in a large container using a stick to stir. Hang washing outside to dry in the sunlight.

Shared spaces should be well ventilated. If a fan is available, point it out of one window and keep another window open to facilitate increased air exchange in the room.

If you share a kitchen, avoid using the kitchen at the same time as other people. If possible, have your meals in your separate room and use separate utensils. If you have a dishwasher, use this to clean and dry your cutlery and crockery. If you do not have a dishwasher, wash crockery and cutlery using your usual washing-up soap and warm water and dry thoroughly.

What do I do if I live with children?

If you live with children, you should follow the advice shown here to the best of your ability. However, we understand that this advice will be difficult to follow with younger children. Your children and other members of household are considered close contacts and should follow guidance for self-quarantine as highlighted below.

How long will I need to isolate at home?

You can end your home isolation 14 days after your illness began. Your illness began on the day that you first developed symptoms, not on the day that a specimen was collected or on the day that the laboratory test was positive. If you were tested with no symptoms and had a positive test result, you can end your home isolation 14 days after the positive specimen was collected. After a 14-day home isolation period, you are considered to no longer be infectious, i.e. you are very unlikely to transmit infection to others. No follow-up laboratory tests will be done during or at the end of your home isolation period.

How long will other members of my household need to stay at home?

All members of your household are considered to be close contacts, and will also need to be on home quarantine during your illness and up to 14 days after their last close contact with you during your symptomatic period. Please ensure they follow the guidance on **what to do if I am a close contact of a person with confirmed disease and am asked to home quarantine**.

Source:

NICD website:

<https://www.nicd.ac.za/what-to-do-if-i-test-positive-for-coronavirus-disease-and-i-am-asked-to-home-isolate%e2%80%8b/>

Call the COVID-19 Hotline: 0800 029 999

Send “hi” on WhatsApp to COVID-19 Connect: 060 012 3456

Visit the website www.sacoronavirus.co.za