

Coronavirus (COVID-19) - information for people experiencing homelessness

Version 3, updated 20 April 2020



What is COVID-19?

Coronavirus or COVID-19 is an illness that can **affect your body temperature and breathing ability**. It is very contagious.

COVID-19 has some similar symptoms to the flu.

The main symptoms to be aware of are:

- a fever (a temp $\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$)
- **OR** a recent history of a fever (e.g. night sweats, chills)
- **OR** a new cough or shortness of breath or sore throat

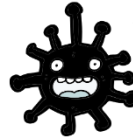
People with other health conditions are more at risk for COVID-19, so need to be especially cautious.

This includes people who:

- are staying near or with someone with the above symptoms
- have long-term health problems (high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, asthma or emphysema)
- have suppressed immunity/auto-immune conditions (eg if have HIV or are immune suppressant medications or undergoing chemotherapy or radiation therapy)
- are pregnant
- smoke (as this weakens your lungs)

REMEMBER: some people only get COVID-19 mildly and most people who get it recover. But it can make some people really sick.

Limit the risk of catching or spreading COVID-19 by following these steps:



- **Avoid close contact with people with fevers and breathing difficulties and/or a diagnosis of COVID-19**



- **Wash hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds** (when around other people or when you go in/out of buildings). If no soap is available use hot/warm running water. Carry a bottle of water and soap or use public toilets where you can



- **Use hand sanitiser gel** if available. Use hand sanitiser available on counters/ at entrances when visiting services



- **Cover your coughs or sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve** (not hands). Toilet paper or paper napkins also work



- **Put used tissues in the bin** immediately, wash hands afterwards
- Only use public transport if you need to



- **Stay 2m apart from other people** – Keep 'physical distance' and avoid social activities that may spread COVID-19



- **Don't share** cigarettes, pipes, needles or asthma inhalers. Don't drink from the same cup, bottle or can as someone else



- **Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth** with unclean hands



- **No shaking out bedding or clothing** near others – germs spread
- If in accommodation, **avoid visitors**

What if you think you have COVID-19 symptoms?



Symptoms may include fever (temp $\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$), coughing, sore throat, shortness of breath.

If you have any of these symptoms, you should get tested at a COVID clinic and isolate yourself from others until you have the results.

If the test results are positive for COVID-19 and you have mild symptoms that you can self-manage, then you should continue to self-isolate for 14 days total.

If your symptoms worsen or you are in anyway concerned you should get yourself to your nearest hospital if able or call 000 and ask for an ambulance.

If rough sleeping, we recognise that self-isolating is a challenge. Contact support staff from a day centre, outreach team or local support service and let them know your situation. Avoid going to the service in person, as this can increase health risks to yourself or others. Call up on the phone if possible.

If concerned that you have COVID-19 and feel unable to cope with your symptoms:

1. **COVID-19 Clinics** are available at all major hospital sites including Royal Perth Hospital. For COVID-19 clinic locations/ opening hours, check the COVID clinic page of the WA Health [website](#)
2. **Contact Health Direct 1800 022 222** or email healthdirect.gov.au. It's a free service to contact with urgent medical problems and you're not sure what to do
3. **Phone** your local hospital (don't just turn up)
4. **Contact** your GP or Homeless Healthcare on **6260 2092**



If feeling unwell:

If you or someone around you has COVID-19 symptoms but you cannot fully self-isolate:

- **Avoid any close contact** with others including sharing tents and bedding
- If **needing food, water or medicine**, make arrangements for someone to drop off supplies to you. **Contact a support worker or service for help.** They will link you to services that can help you
- If **needing a prescription for medications**, contact your Doctor
- If needing **prescriptions filled**, contact your usual pharmacy. You will need to make arrangements for having this dropped off
- **Stay in contact** with friends, family and support services by phone or through social media/internet

Using day centres & support services

- Unfortunately, many day and drop-in centres have had to make changes because of COVID-19 restrictions. This protects the health of everyone but we know it creates difficulties for people who rely on these for social support, food or showers.
- If you go to a day centre or food relief service, use hand sanitiser before entering, and you must remain 1.5m apart from other people
- If you have symptoms of COVID-19 you should not go to places like day centres

Feeling anxious or worried about COVID -19?

- it is totally normal to feel a bit anxious in a pandemic, and so much has changed as a result of COVID-19 restrictions
- Talk to friends or support staff if feel worried
- Follow hygiene and health advice to keep yourself and others safe

For more Information:

National COVID-19 Hotline (24/7) – call 1800 020 080

WA Department of Health: https://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/A_E/Coronavirus

Harm reduction for people using drugs: <https://www.talkingdrugs.org/covid19-harm-reduction-for-people-who-use-drugs>