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Coronavirus (COVID-19) daily update

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This Chief Health Officer update is intended to provide clinicians and the Victorian public with information about the number of confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in Victoria as well as relevant public health response activities in Victoria. Chief Health Officer Alerts will continue to be issued when there are changes to the public health advice related to coronavirus (COVID-19).

31/12/2020

What's new?

- Victoria has recorded five new cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) since yesterday.
- The total number of coronavirus (COVID-19) cases reported in Victoria is now 20,381 including those in hotel quarantine.
- There were no new deaths and the state's death toll stands at 820.
- There are 16 active cases in Victoria, this includes nine local cases and seven in hotel quarantine, 19,538 people have recovered.
- A total of 3,875,893 test results have been received. This is an increase of 13,097 since yesterday.
- You can find further details in [today's coronavirus \(COVID-19\) media release](#).
- The DHHS website has full details in the [interactive daily report](#).

New Victoria cases

- The five positive cases identified yesterday are linked to Smile Buffalo Thai restaurant in Black Rock on Monday 21 December 2020. On that night one person with coronavirus (COVID-19) and two close contacts attended this restaurant, as did a returned traveller from NSW. The returned traveller from NSW is being tested, and DHHS is investigating their movements.

- Extensive contact tracing is underway and as a result there are 52 close contacts being supported to isolate immediately.
- Anyone who went to Smile Buffalo Thai restaurant on Monday 21 December 2020 should quarantine and get tested immediately.
- DHHS will continue to update exposure sites on the list of [Case locations and outbreaks](#).
- Additional testing sites are being set up in the affected areas. Find [testing site details and opening hours](#).

NSW Border

- From 11:59pm on Friday 1 January 2021, Victoria will close its borders to New South Wales (NSW). Any Victorian currently in the Green Zone (regional NSW) will have until 11:59pm on Friday 1 January 2021 to come home.
- This does not include Victorians in the Blue Mountains City Council and Wollongong City Council local government areas, who must apply for a new permit and arrive in Victoria before 11:59pm on Thursday 31 December.

COVIDSafe Happy New Year

- From 5pm on Thursday 31 December 2020, the limit of people gathering in private homes will be reduced from 30 to 15. If you are planning a party tonight, you need to reduce your numbers from 30 to 15.
- From 5pm on Thursday 31 December 2020 masks will be mandatory indoors. There are exceptions, including when you are eating and drinking or if you have a health condition.
- New Year's Eve will look a little different this year, with the Victorian Government working closely with police, emergency services and local government to ensure celebrations across the state are COVIDSafe.
- There will be no fireworks in the CBD as this event cannot safely form part of this year's celebrations. Instead, Victorians are encouraged to find COVIDSafe ways to celebrate the end of 2020, whether it's at home, with friends and family, or at a ticketed event.
- If you're feeling unwell, get tested immediately and stay home until you have your results.
- People should only come into the CBD if they are attending a ticketed event or have a booking at a hospitality venue.
- Police will be patrolling the CBD, regional towns and coastal areas to ensure public venues are safe.
- Victorians are encouraged to have a COVIDSafe New Year by:
 - taking hand sanitiser out with you and practicing good hand hygiene
 - keeping a 1.5 metre distance from people you don't live with, and wearing a fitted mask when you can't
 - wearing a fitted mask at all times on public transport and in ride-sharing services
 - ensuring you have no more than 30 visitors to your home per day
 - limiting outdoor gatherings in a public place to 100 people

- not sharing drinks with others
- not kissing and hugging people you don't live with

Testing sites over New Year period

- Coronavirus (COVID-19) testing remains one of the best ways we can keep people safe and stay open, so we're asking anyone with symptoms to come and get tested - regardless of the time of year.
- There will be reduced capacity of some testing sites over the Christmas break until 2 January, including reduced hours for some Community health service-led testing sites.
- However, in excess of 60 testing sites will remain open throughout the summer break.
- Testing sites will also be operating in the popular summer destinations at Torquay, Lorne, and the Mornington Peninsula.
- Testing site details, including opening hours, are available on the [Where to get tested page](#)

Visitors from or those returning from New South Wales

- A [permit system is now in place](#) for all New South Wales residents traveling to Victoria, residents from other states travelling through NSW and Victorians visiting NSW and returning home.
- Victorians are strongly advised not to travel to Sydney as you may not be able to re-enter without undertaking hotel quarantine for 14 days.
- Anyone trying to enter Victoria from the Northern Beaches and exposure sites (hot zone) and Greater Sydney and the Central Coast (red zone) will not be permitted to enter.
- Fitted face masks are now mandatory when in airport terminals and is strongly recommended to wear a mask on your flight.
- If you think you or a may have been exposed or have been to these locations, then please contact the Department on 1800 675 398. We will ensure that anyone who has been exposed to this outbreak - regardless of whether you normally live in Victoria, NSW or elsewhere - is supported to safely and appropriately self-isolate and get tested.
- NSW Health are continually updating their [high-risk exposure sites](#) and we will advise the Victorian community accordingly.
- Victoria continues to work closely with NSW Health in response to an outbreak in NSW to ensure any people who have visited high-risk locations in the state immediately get tested and self-isolate.

Face masks

- Face masks are now mandatory in all indoor settings, including workplaces. There are exceptions, including when you are eating and drinking or if you have a health condition.
- Under [COVIDSafe Summer restrictions](#), there is a requirement to carry a mask at all times.
- From 11:59pm 6 December, masks are required in a limited number of places: on public transport, in rideshare vehicles and taxis, in some retail settings including indoor shopping

centres, supermarkets, department stores and indoor markets.

- Fitted face masks are now mandatory when in airport terminals and is strongly recommended to wear a mask on your flight.

Wastewater monitoring continues in more than 60 locations

- Low levels of viral fragments have been detected in samples taken this week at wastewater treatment plants in Castlemaine and Corio, and in sub-catchments of the Colac sewage system.
- It is likely people who have recovered from coronavirus (COVID-19) and are no longer infectious are continuing to shed the virus. We have seen similar patterns in multiple locations across the state and we expect this to continue. It is not a cause for concern.
- As always, it remains vitally important that any Victorians with any coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, no matter how mild, stay home and get tested.

Current advice to clinicians

- Clinicians should be asking patients if they are from or if they have been in New South Wales and if so, to check the areas of risk defined by the NSW Government and recommended actions.
- [Statement on Rapid Antigen Testing for SARS-CoV-2 \(COVID-19\) diagnosis in symptomatic persons.](#)
- Notifications to the department of a confirmed diagnosis of coronavirus (COVID-19) can be done online. You can submit an [online form](#) to our public health team, rather than calling us, saving you time and resolving your case load more efficiently.
- The department continues to ask commercial passenger vehicle drivers and food delivery drivers to get tested for coronavirus (COVID-19). If commercial passenger vehicle drivers and food delivery drivers do not have any symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19), they will not have to stay home to wait for their test results. Commercial passenger vehicle drivers and food delivery drivers will need to tell staff at the testing centre/site that they work in the industry.

COVID-19 testing criteria

- Practitioners should test any patients who meet the clinical criteria below:
 - Fever OR chills in the absence of an alternative diagnosis that explains the clinical presentation* OR
 - Acute respiratory infection (e.g. cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, runny nose, or loss or changes in sense of smell or taste)
 - **Note:** testing is also recommended for people with new onset of other clinical symptoms consistent with coronavirus (COVID-19)** AND who are from the following cohorts: close contacts of a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19); those who have returned from overseas in the past 14 days; or those who are healthcare or aged care workers. Testing is recommended for those cohorts with onset of other clinical symptoms**. Asymptomatic testing is not recommended at this stage except for targeted programs

- *Clinical discretion applies including consideration of the potential for co-infection (e.g. concurrent infection with SARS-CoV-2 and influenza)
- **headache, myalgia, stuffy nose, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea.
- If referring your patients for coronavirus (COVID-19) testing, a list of testing locations can be found on the [getting tested for coronavirus page](#).
- If a symptomatic patient that presents for testing, **confirms exposure to a known coronavirus (COVID-19) case** within the past 14 days, and the outbreak definition is met, the test sample is to be treated as an 'outbreak sample'.

Victoria's restriction levels

- The State of Emergency has been extended until **3 January 2021** to allow the Chief Health Officer's directions to remain in force.

Key messages for the community

- High risk sites have been reported in the Northern Beaches area of Sydney. People who have attended some sites are required to self-quarantine for 14 days. Any person who has been in Sydney who has symptoms, however mild, should be tested and isolate until a result is available. Exposure sites are listed on the [NSW Health website](#).
- Testing is a critical help to keep numbers down so it's extremely important that if people have [symptoms](#), however mild, they get tested. Go home straight after your test and isolate while you wait for the results. Go to the [testing map](#) for locations.
- [Public exposure sites are listed on the DHHS website](#). If you have visited any of the locations listed during the dates indicated, you should watch for coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms. If symptoms occur immediately get tested and stay at home while you wait for results.
- COVIDSafe principles apply across Victoria:
 - You must carry a face mask with you when you leave home. You must wear your face mask on public transport, while in taxis or ride share vehicles, or when going to large retail venues, including shopping centres, supermarkets and department stores.
 - Wearing a face mask is strongly recommended in all other situations when you can't keep 1.5 metres distance from other people. Don't go to work if you feel unwell.
 - Maintain a physical distance of 1.5 metres.
 - Cough and sneeze into a tissue or your elbow.
 - Wash hands with soap or use hand sanitiser regularly.
- The [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Home Safety Plan \(PDF\) is available](#) for download which tells you what you need to know to help you, your family and friends stay safe and well.
- Many Victorians are feeling fatigued, isolated or lonely. If you are in need of support for your mental health there are [mental health resources](#) you can access on our website.
- If Victorians are not safe at home, they can seek help and support at an [Orange Door](#) or other family violence support service. If you or someone you know is at risk or experiencing family violence, call 000 in an emergency or safe steps 24/7 crisis service on 1800 015 188.

- The [Partners in Wellbeing](#) hotline (1300 375 330) is available for referrals from people who identify as LGBTIQ, multicultural, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people, veterans and people experiencing homelessness.

Clinical information

- [Latest coronavirus \(COVID-19\) information for Victorian health services and general practice](#).
- [Latest information about providing immunisation services during Coronavirus Pandemic](#) (Word)

Online resources

- Locations of respiratory assessment clinics and testing sites are available [online and through an interactive map](#).
- Find out the latest information about visiting [care facilities](#) and [hospitals](#) on our website.
- [Protecting our healthcare workers \(PDF\)](#) sets out the very latest in our understanding of coronavirus (COVID-19) and how it can spread within healthcare settings – both hospitals and aged-care facilities. More information can be [found online](#).
- A new [Infection Prevention and Control](#) resource hub is now online, and includes a new factsheet on protective eyewear and the [Guide to the conventional use of PPE \(Word\)](#). Updated information for health care workers is available online on the [PPE coronavirus page](#).

Consumer information

- [Financial and other support for coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Translated resources in over 50 languages](#)
- [Victoria's current restrictions](#)
- [Latest coronavirus information from the World Health Organization](#)
- [Latest travel advice from Smartraveller](#)

Contacts

Medical practitioners needing clinical information or to notify confirmed cases can contact the Department of Health and Human Services Communicable Diseases Section on 1300 651 160 (24 hours).

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Contact

Address: 50 Lonsdale Street
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Phone: [1300 650 172](tel:1300650172)

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The department acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Custodians of the land and acknowledges and pays respect to their Elders, past and present.

The department is committed to safe and inclusive work places, policies and services for people of LGBTIQ communities and their families.



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