

ACTPS WHS COVID-19 resource: workplace exposure risk assessment and response guidance

*excluding healthcare, first responder, early childhood, school and correctional settings

This guidance is designed to support the workplace to assess and manage situations where a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 has been in the workplace while infectious.

This guidance does not apply to exposures in households or settings such as healthcare (including residential aged care and disability support service providers), first responders (including police and fire emergency services) early childhood education, school and correctional facilities. These workplaces will have specific advice and arrangements in place for managing the response in the case of an exposure in these settings.

Workplace exposure risk assessment

A workplace exposure refers to contact with a person in the workplace or in the course of work activities who has subsequently tested positive for COVID-19 *and* was in the workplace during their infectious period. The infectious period commences two days before they started having symptoms or the two days prior to them testing positive (whichever came first).

Under the [Public Health Direction \(Diagnosed and Household contacts\) Emergency Direction 2022 \(No.3\)](#) people who have tested positive for COVID-19 must tell the people they live with that they have tested positive for COVID-19. They should also tell their workplace and social contacts where applicable. They should notify any of these people if they spent time with them from the two days before they started having symptoms or tested positive (whichever came first) about their risk of getting COVID-19.

ACTPS employees who test positive for COVID-19, and have attended the workplace or have undertaken work outside the home during their infectious period, must notify their manager that they have tested positive for COVID-19 and that they attended the workplace or undertook work outside of home during their infectious period, so that the manager and the workplace can conduct a workplace exposure risk assessment. If the person was not in the workplace during their infectious period, then no assessment is required.

The [ACTPS COVID-19 WHS guide](#) provides directorates with guidance for managing the risks associated with COVID-19 in their workplaces. Noting that workplaces already have a range of approaches in place to manage the risk of exposure to, or transmission of, COVID-19 in the workplace, this guidance assists ACTPS workplaces to respond in a consistent and timely manner when notified that a person who has tested positive to COVID-19 has been in the workplace.

Workplace obligations following notification that a person who has tested positive with COVID-19 has been in the workplace or undertaking work activities outside the home

Directorates must take reasonable steps to notify ACTPS employees, contractors, clients and other visitors in the workplace who have had moderate or high risk exposure (refer to table for descriptions) to the COVID-19 positive person during their infectious period and advise them that they are at risk of contracting COVID-19. They should also advise them of their testing and quarantine obligations, including where they can get more information on what they need to do. Directorates should have systems in place to enable the identification and contacting of workplace exposure contacts to occur in a timely manner.

The manager and the workplace must:

- a. Conduct a risk assessment for each workplace exposure using the *Workplace exposure assessment and response matrix* (Workplaces should consider and identify those who are suitably qualified and experienced to conduct the workplace exposure risk and response assessment)
- b. If the worker likely contracted COVID-19 in the workplace or in the course of their work, the manager must liaise with their directorate WHS area to discuss the circumstances, and:
 - i. submit a [work incident report](#); and
 - ii. consider whether to [notify WorkSafe ACT](#) if the worker likely contracted COVID-19 in the workplace **and** the worker is hospitalised.
- c. Identify individuals who are high or moderate risk contacts. Managers only need to identify workplace contacts, not contacts in other settings such as family or personal/social contacts. Workplace contacts may include customers, contractors, and service users.
- d. Maintain a list of identified moderate and high risk contacts, held confidentially and securely within the workplace. Directorates should review the arrangements they have in place to manage contact details of ACTPS employees, contractors, clients and other visitors in the workplace in accordance with privacy legislation. Contact details of clients/service users is only required to be maintained if they have prolonged contact with an ACTPS employee.
- e. Advise moderate and high risk contacts to:
 - > follow the testing and quarantine recommendations for their exposure category, detailed on the ACT's COVID-19 website, and
 - > not attend the workplace until the recommended quarantine period is complete and any testing requirements are met.

Note: communication templates that directorates may use when contacting moderate and high risk contacts are available.
- f. Reinforce the need for all workers to comply with measures in place to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 including monitoring for symptoms, staying home if unwell and following the ACT Health advice for testing, isolating and quarantining.
- g. consider existing communications mechanisms in a shared building or co-tenancy to ensure others who may have been exposed in the workplace are notified appropriately.

Note: It is important that wherever possible the confidentiality of the person who has tested positive for COVID-19 is maintained. Only the minimum information required to be released to identify high or moderate risk contacts should be used. Managers should discuss with the worker who has tested positive for COVID-19 how their privacy will be managed during the notification process.

Managers must maintain contact with employees who are identified as workplace exposure contacts and work with them to determine if any supports are required and confirm the proposed date to return to work.

ACT Health only provides written clearance from isolation to those who test positive for COVID-19.

All usual COVID-19 workplace cleaning regimes should be continued in addition to all other COVID-safe measures to reduce the risk.

Information to support managers to determine a workplace exposure risk and take the appropriate action is provided below.

Employee responsibilities if notified that they have had a workplace exposure

ACTPS employees who are advised that they are a moderate or high risk workplace contact must undertake a COVID-19 test as soon as possible, meet any testing requirements outlined in the ACT Health advice for the type of exposure, and test again if they develop any symptoms consistent with COVID-19.

Moderate or high risk contacts must not attend the workplace during the period that the ACT Health guidance recommends that they should quarantine. If a contact is not sure how long they must quarantine for, they should check the ACT COVID-19 website for more information.

Determining exposure risk

To determine the workplace exposure risk, workplaces must consider the nature of the contact with the person who has tested positive for COVID-19. The ACTPS workplace exposure risk assessment tool (the tool) describes circumstances that determine the level of risk. For the purposes of the tool, workplaces must note the following:

- > A **person with COVID-19** refers to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 on a PCR or rapid antigen test.
- > A **COVID-19 test** refers to both rapid antigen tests and PCR tests.
- > The **infectious period** commences two days before someone started having symptoms or tested positive (whichever came first).
- > **Mask wearing** refers to both the person diagnosed with COVID-19 and the workplace contact wearing a mask appropriately (i.e. over the nose and mouth, with a good fit) for the duration of the interaction.
- > **Prolonged exposure** refers to spending a long time (i.e. 4 hours or longer) with someone who has subsequently tested positive to COVID-19, during their infectious period.
- > **Workplace** also refers to locations outside of the home where the employee is performing work for the ACTPS.
- > A **contact at risk of exposure** could be another ACTPS employee, a contractor, volunteer, and/or service user/client who interacted with the person who has tested positive for COVID-19 during their infectious

period. Workplaces must take reasonable steps to notify those who interacted with the COVID-19 positive employee and who are rated as a moderate or high risk. Workplaces should take reasonable action to maintain records of people whom workers interact with for longer periods, such as where an employee has a caseload of clients. It is acknowledged that in many situations it will not be practicable to maintain contact details for people who are not ACTPS employees.

- > **Quarantine** refers to a person separating themselves from others to reduce the chance of further transmission, after they have been exposed to someone who has tested positive to COVID-19. This means the person must stay at home until they meet the criteria outlined by ACT Health (such as until they receive a negative test result). A person who is in quarantine must not attend any ACTPS workplace during this period.
- > **Isolation** refers to the period of time where a person who has tested positive to COVID-19 on a rapid antigen or a PCR test is required to separate themselves from others. This means the person must stay at home for a period of at least 7 days, and keep themselves separate from others in their household as much as possible. A person who is in isolation must not attend any ACTPS workplace during this period.

Existing workplace exposure risk mitigation

All ACTPS workplaces have COVID safe plans in place to reduce workplace COVID-19 risks.

Approaches to reduce the risk include, but are not limited to:

- > wearing of masks in all indoor workplaces and outdoor settings where physical distancing cannot be maintained
- > ensuring physical distancing of 1.5m between workers and clients / customers is maintained whenever possible
- > interactions indoors are kept to a minimum time period including through the use of virtual meetings and outdoor spaces when people are together
- > reducing the movement of workers between workplaces, including working from home where possible
- > having methods in place to determine and make contact with workers if required for notification or contact tracing purposes
- > implementation of workplace cleaning regimes that meet the SafeWork Australia requirements
- > optimising ventilation where possible
- > ensuring access to hand washing or sanitiser options
- > workers staying home when unwell and getting tested if they have COVID-19 symptoms
- > workplace specific actions.

COVID safe practices are developed in consultation with workers, reviewed, monitored, promoted and adhered to. Workplaces must regularly review and monitor the approaches in place to mitigate against the risk of exposure to or transmission of COVID-19 in the workplace.

Further information

- > For information and guidance on exposure and risk levels [Information for people exposed to COVID-19](#)
- > For information for people with COVID-19 [Information for people who test positive to COVID-19](#)
- > For information on recovery from COVID-19, including returning to work [Recovering from COVID-19](#)

ACTPS COVID-19 workplace exposure risk assessment tool

<p>When is an assessment required</p>	<p>ACTPS employees who test positive for COVID-19, and have attended work during their infectious period, must notify their manager so a workplace exposure risk assessment can be conducted. If they were not in the workplace during their infectious period, then no assessment is required.</p> <p>The risk of infection with COVID-19 following exposure to someone who has tested positive increases if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - workplace contacts spent a long time with the person who has COVID-19, and interacted closely with them - if the person was indoors with someone who has COVID-19 (the risk is lower if both were outdoors) - if the exposed person or the person with COVID-19 were not wearing face masks (the risk is lower if they were both wearing a face mask properly) 		
<p>Workplace contact risk rating</p>	<p>LOW</p>	<p>MODERATE</p>	<p>HIGH</p>
<p>Type of workplace exposure</p>	<p>Interactions that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • outdoors for any length of time, with or without physical distance adhered to or masks worn; • in well ventilated indoor space for any length of time, where physical distance was >1.5m and masks worn; • in a small enclosed space (such as a small meeting room or vehicle cabin) for <30 continuous minutes, with masks worn) 	<p>Interactions that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in well ventilated indoor space for >30 minutes with either physical distance or mask wearing not adhered to • in a small enclosed space (such as a small meeting room or vehicle cabin) for > 30 continuous minutes, with masks worn 	<p>Interactions that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prolonged (more than 4 hours) while indoors (except large/well ventilated space); or • in a small enclosed space (such as a small meeting room or vehicle cabin) for >30 continuous minutes and COVID safe practices for mask wearing and physical distancing were not consistently adhered to during interaction. <p>NOTE - Interactions that take place outdoors, or in large well ventilated indoor areas would not be considered high risk, unless exceptional circumstances exist, such as sustained failing of multiple safety controls, eg extended close physical contact without masks or interactions over multiple consecutive days.</p>
<p>Action required by the workplace</p>	<p>Workplaces must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • confirm that safety controls were being communicated (such as with signposting) in the workplace at the time of the interaction and at point of assessment <p>Where that condition is met, it is not necessary to advise workplace contacts that a person who has tested positive was in the workplace.</p> <p>Where measures were not effectively communicated in the workplace, review safety arrangements with a view to improving communication.</p>	<p>Workplaces must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • notify employees and other work-related contacts (where practicable) that they have been identified as moderate risk contacts and to follow the ACT Health guidance Checklist and template • provide employees with access to onsite rapid antigen testing (where available) or leave to access a PCR test. If an onsite rapid antigen test result is negative, the employee can continue to attend the workplace • implement work from home arrangements for affected employees, if possible, if waiting for test results • if working from home is not possible, or the employee is unwell, provide leave while in quarantine • maintain ongoing contact with affected employees • implement immediate action to review workplace COVID safe practices 	<p>Workplaces must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • notify employees and other work-related contacts (where practicable) that are identified as high risk contacts as soon as possible to follow the ACT health guidance • if possible and the employee is well, implement work from home arrangements for affected employees • if working from home is not possible, or the employee is unwell, provide access to leave whilst required to be in quarantine • reinforce the workplace COVID safe controls for the workforce • maintain ongoing contact with affected employees • take immediate action to review workplace COVID-safe practices
<p>Action required by workplace contacts</p>	<p>All workers should continue to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitor closely for symptoms of COVID-19 • undergo a rapid antigen or PCR test for COVID-19 if they develop any symptoms and quarantine until receiving a negative result and symptoms resolve. <p>Employees can continue to attend the workplace if they do not have symptoms.</p>	<p>Employees identified as moderate risk contacts must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a rapid antigen or PCR test as soon as possible and quarantine until a negative result is received. If onsite rapid antigen testing is not available, leave the workplace – where onsite RAT is available, it should be used to limit movement and minimise work impacts • follow the ACT Health guidance for a moderate risk contact; including having another rapid antigen or PCR test on day 6 from last date of exposure, if the first test was undertaken before day 5. There is no need to quarantine while awaiting results of the day 6 test if asymptomatic. • monitor closely for symptoms for the 14 days following the exposure • get tested if symptoms arise and quarantine until a negative result is received and symptoms resolve <p>Employees can attend the workplace if they receive a negative test result and do not have symptoms</p>	<p>Employees identified as high-risk contacts must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • leave the workplace (if at work) and have a rapid antigen test or PCR test as soon as possible. • quarantine for 7 days from the date of last exposure, regardless of the initial test result • follow the ACT Health guidance for a high risk contact <p>Employees can attend the workplace after they receive a negative test result, complete 7 days of quarantine and if they do not have symptoms</p>
<p>Requirements for release from quarantine on return to the workplace: ACT Health only provides written clearance (email and text) from isolation for people who have tested positive for COVID-19.</p> <p>High and moderate risk workplace exposure contacts must follow the advice on the ACT Health website at the conclusion of their quarantine period.</p>			