

Media Release

The Hon Martin Foley MP
Minister for Health
Minister for Ambulance Services
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TESTING CHANGES TO FOCUS ON HIGHEST-RISK VICTORIANS

Victoria will operationalise isolation and testing requirements for COVID-19 cases and contacts recommended by National Cabinet yesterday, with new pandemic orders taking effect from 11:59pm last night.

The orders are an extension of Victoria's current settings, which reduced the isolation burden for many when they were introduced in November and defined a household (or close) contact as someone who lives with a case or has spent four or more hours with them in a house, care facility or accommodation.

Under the new orders Victorians who test positive to COVID-19 must isolate for seven days from the date of their test. This is reduced from 10 days.

The orders also mean a change in the way Victorians access PCR tests. PCR tests in Victoria will now be available for anyone who has symptoms and anyone who has tested positive on a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT).

Under the new orders, household contacts who do not have symptoms must use a Rapid Antigen Test on Day 1 and Day 6 of their isolation period and household contacts who are symptomatic must have a PCR test on Day 1 – if they're negative, they then use a RAT on Day 6 of their isolation period.

For these contacts, if a RAT is not available, a PCR can be used instead. If people who do not have symptoms cannot access a RAT test, they can seek a PCR for their day 1 or day 6 test.

Contacts can release themselves from isolation on Day 7 with a negative result on these tests. Out of caution, household contacts are strongly recommended to use RATs on other days, too – and must get a PCR test if symptoms emerge or if they test positive on a RAT.

All other contacts, like social, workplace and education contacts who have symptoms are required to get a PCR test and isolate until their result, just like any Victorian.

If these contacts don't have symptoms, they are strongly recommended to use a RAT every day for five days. If people cannot access a RAT test, they should monitor for symptoms and seek a PCR if symptoms emerge.

Victorians who don't have symptoms and who aren't contacts are asked to always monitor for symptoms and stay COVIDSafe

Under the new orders, positive cases will now also be required to inform their household and social contacts of their positive result and of the isolation and testing protocols that apply – just like they already have to with their workplace or education settings.

With any surge in cases, this change will mean faster advice and clearer direction to household contacts, coming directly from the people who know them best.

The new orders apply retroactively to cases or contacts who are currently quarantining or isolating. For example, a case who got tested on December 25 and returned a positive result – currently isolating until January 4 – will now isolate until January 1.

International travellers will now have the option of completing a RAT on arrival and day 5-7 instead of a PCR test, and they will not be required to isolate. Anyone who is symptomatic or returns a positive RAT is required to get a PCR test and isolate until the results are known.

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Victorians can see what they have to do if they are a case or a contact by visiting coronavirus.vic.gov.au/checklist.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Martin Foley

“These measures strike a balance between containing the risks of COVID-19 to help support a testing system that is efficient and effective in an environment of high case numbers.”

“Victorians now need to remember to get a PCR if you have symptoms, or if you have had a positive result on a Rapid Antigen Test. For everything else, use Rapid Antigen Tests, monitor for symptoms, and stay COVIDSafe.”

“More than 10 per cent of Victorians aged 18 and over have already received their third dose and almost 93 per cent of Victorians 12 and over are fully vaccinated. If you haven’t booked your appointment, please book today.”