



FACT SHEET

INFORMATION FOR SUPPORT WORKERS AND CARERS ON CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) TESTING FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

21 May 2020

Who should be tested?

To help stop the spread of COVID-19, anyone with symptoms of an acute respiratory infection should get tested. The symptoms include fever, coughing, sore throat, and shortness of breath.

For further information on who should be tested, please contact the National Coronavirus Helpline on (free call) **1800 020 080**. If someone is experiencing severe symptoms, call 000.

Where can testing be done?

If someone you care for has COVID-19 symptoms, you or they should seek advice from their GP or the National Coronavirus Helpline about whether they should be tested.

The GP can help arrange a test or they can visit a GP-led respiratory clinic or fever clinic to be tested.

The National Coronavirus Helpline can tell you the nearest clinic. You or the person with the disability should telephone the GP or respiratory/ fever clinic to make an appointment before visiting.

How to explain the testing process to a person with disability?

1. A doctor or other health professional, such a nurse, will take your temperature.
2. The doctor or health professional will be dressed in personal protective equipment (PPE) which includes: a face mask, gloves, a gown, and an eye mask.
3. The doctor or health professional needs to take a swab from inside your nose and the back of your mouth. They will use a medium-sized stick (~20cm long) to take the swab from your nose and another one for your mouth. The stick has a soft cotton part on the end of it which takes the swab.
4. You may feel a little funny having the stick inside your nose, it may hurt a little too.
5. You will need to open your mouth for the doctor or health professional to take the swab inside your mouth.
6. Try to stay as still as possible during the test.
7. You might be asked to cough into a container.
8. You might need to also have a blood test.
9. It usually takes 1-2 days to find out the results from all of the tests you've done.
10. After the test, you might go home or you might need to stay in hospital until you feel better.

Note: Some of these steps may be challenging or not possible for some people with disability. You can discuss any questions or concerns with the doctor or health professional.

Tips for managing stress and anxiety about the testing process

The testing process may be quite stressful for a person with disability. Where possible and as appropriate, involve the person in as many aspects of the decision-making as possible.

Communication

Prior to the testing, explain to the person what the testing process will involve, using a communication method that is suited to their individual needs. It is important to involve people that the person with disability trusts, such as family members or friends. If possible, arrange to have these people present when explaining the testing process and throughout the test itself.

Location

If appropriate, it is preferable that the test is conducted in a location that is familiar to the person with disability such as their usual GP clinic.

It is important to convey the communication needs of the person with disability to the health professional taking the test, to ensure that the information is provided in an accessible format.

What to do if testing is too stressful for the person with disability?

In the event that the testing process is too stressful for the person with disability and no other testing alternatives are available, then the individual will need to isolate at home. The person will need to take all the necessary precautions, as outlined in the next section, and notify their local public health authority. The public health authority will advise how long the person will need to isolate for.

What happens after the test?

The sample taken during testing will be sent to a laboratory. In most cases, it will take 24-48 hours for the test results to be confirmed. The GP or the clinic where the person was tested will make contact to notify of the result, either by calling or by SMS.

If the person is well enough to be at home while waiting for the test result, they must [isolate at home](#) until the result is available. If the test is negative, they do not need to stay in isolation but are advised to stay home until they feel better. If the test is positive, the person needs to continue to isolate until advised by the local public health authority that they can leave isolation.

Isolation means:

- staying at home and not going into public places, including work, school and shops
- where possible, staying at least 1.5 metres away from other people
- if close contact with family, carers or support workers is required, using PPE
- washing hands often with soap and water
- coughing and sneezing into the elbow
- avoiding cooking for or caring for other members of their household
- wearing a mask (provided by their doctor) if close contact with other people is unavoidable.

If symptoms get worse, and/or there are any other health concerns, please call the person's GP for advice or contact the National Coronavirus Helpline on **1800 020 080**. This line operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

If the person develops difficulty breathing or becomes seriously unwell and it is an emergency, please call triple zero (**000**) immediately. Alert ambulance staff that the person has been tested for COVID-19 and is awaiting results.

More information

If you require assistance or have any questions related to COVID-19, then please contact the [Disability Information Helpline](#) on (free call) **1800 643 787**. The helpline is operated by the Department of Social Services and provides advice to people with disability, their families, carers, and support workers. It is available Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm (AEST) and Saturday and Sunday 9am to 7pm (AEST), but is not available on national public holidays.

Alternatively, please call the National Coronavirus Helpline on (free call) **1800 020 080**. This line operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

For the most up-to-date advice, please visit [health.gov.au](https://www.health.gov.au) for the latest information and resources related to the COVID-19 pandemic for people with disability. For National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) specific information for carers and support workers please visit the [NDIS website](#).