

Assessing and managing the risk: COVID exposures in primary and community health care settings

1. Procedure Statement

This risk assessment guidance is for primary and community health care settings.

The aim of this guide is to:

- Detail the quarantine and testing requirements of COVID-19 contacts who work in primary and community health care settings and how their risk of exposure can be mitigated;
- Provide a step-by-step guide for primary and community health settings to support the process of contact tracing in the event that SA Health have reduced capacity to undertake this work.

This guidance balances the COVID-19 transmission risk with the risk of furloughing staff to the extent that primary and community health care services become non-operational. It is to be used when any person with COVID-19 has attended a primary and community health care setting to assess the exposure risk level of contacts and guide their management in terms of quarantine and testing requirements. Guidance for staff who are contacts of a laboratory confirmed case of COVID-19 is detailed under Tables 1-3 and guidance for visitors/patients is detailed under Tables 4-6.

It will also be used for staff working at a primary or community health care setting who have been identified as a contact of a COVID-19 case in another setting (e.g. household, social or other community exposure site). In this situation, the exposure risk level will be determined by SA Health (**unless capacity is exceeded**) and the health care worker will be directly notified of the outcome. The quarantine and testing requirements outlined in this guide will then be applied.

2. Background

This guidance is general. SA Health will continue to undertake contact risk assessment and management in collaboration with workplaces unless capacity is exceeded. It is intended that SA Health will continue to actively support settings with significant transmission events or where other identified risks exist (workforce, operational continuity or community risk).

The guidance will be updated to reflect shifting COVID epidemiology and subsequent changes to contact management practices in South Australia.

Anyone with COVID symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, shortness of breath, change in taste, change in smell, diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting, headache, muscle pain) should not be present in a primary or community health setting, unless they are attending as a patient for their symptoms as part of a suspect COVID patient pathway or they require urgent medical care. In all other cases, they should immediately obtain a test, return home and stay home, isolated away from others in the household, until they return a negative COVID test. They may then present for care at the relevant health care service as per local protocols.



3. Applicability

This guidance relates to staff working in the following primary and community health care settings:

- Primary and community health care (e.g. GP clinics, private consulting rooms, allied health clinics, radiology practices, dental practices, chiropractors, optometrists, osteopaths, psychologists, counsellors, physiotherapists, remedial massage, traditional medicine, acupuncture)
- Paramedics
- Pharmacies
- Pathology laboratories, collection centres and offices
- Disability care (non-residential)

Separate guidance is provided for tertiary health care services (hospitals) and other workplaces and businesses (who do not use healthcare worker PPE).

Please note: The guidance in this document should be used by the above primary and community health care settings in place of 'Appendix D: Work Permissions and Restrictions Framework for Workers in Health Care Settings – Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) CDNA National Guidelines for Public Health Units.'

4. Procedure Detail

Where primary and community health care settings are required to support contact tracing in their workplace this step-by-step procedure should be followed.

a. Determine the infectious period

A case's infectious period begins two calendar days prior to symptom onset.

- For example, if a case's symptoms start on 1 December 2021 (any time of the day), their infectious period commenced at 12.01am on 29 November 2021.

If the case does not have symptoms, the infectious period begins two calendar days prior to the date that the positive test was collected.

- For example, if a case was swabbed on 1 December 2021, their infectious period commenced at 12.01am on 29 November 2021.

If you determine that your worker/s or clients did not come into contact with the case during their infectious period, they are not a contact and no further action is required, unless they have been directed by SA Health.

It should be noted that the infectious period does not end until clearance of COVID-19 has occurred by SA Health and clearance notification issued.

If you determine that your worker/s or clients did come into contact with the case during their infectious period, continue through the steps in the procedure.

b. Determine the duration of contact

Determine the duration of time the case and the contact were together.

Time periods are cumulative across a period of one day, e.g., two separate 10-minute exposures should be assessed as a "prolonged" (>15 min) exposure.

c. Determine the proximity of contact

Determine the physical distance between the case and the contact (<1.5m or >1.5m).

d. Estimate the size of the space (if indoors)

Estimate the size of the indoor space.

e. Risk assess the contacts of a COVID positive case

Contacts will be assessed as a low risk casual contact, casual contact (critical worker), vaccinated close contact (critical worker) or unvaccinated close contact (critical worker) using the Tables 1-3. Separate tables are used for vaccinated and unvaccinated contacts.

Tables 1, 2 and 3 apply to all staff who work in a primary or community setting and who should be using healthcare PPE (general practices, private consulting rooms, dental, allied health, alternative health practices, chiropractors, optometrists, imaging, psychologists, counsellors, acupuncture, traditional medicine, remedial massage), who have had possible exposure to a confirmed COVID case.

Primary or community health professions/roles who are required to come within 1.5m of clients during the provision of health care or handle COVID samples are strongly advised to wear eye protection in addition to a mask to minimise transmission risk.

f. Contact SA Health

Once the risk assessment is complete, fill out the Excel spreadsheet that is available for download with this document.

Make sure information is completed for:

- Tab 1 – Staff who have had contact with the COVID-19 case during the infectious period
- Tab 2 – Members of the public who have had contact with the COVID-19 case during the infectious period

Consider all people who may have had exposure to a COVID-19 case during the infectious period including staff common areas, meal breaks or other non-routine work situations onsite.

Once complete, send to SA Health at health.coronavirusenquiries@sa.gov.au

SA Health will notify close contacts of their exposure to a case and the necessary actions, including their quarantine and testing requirements.

Your workplace should notify casual contacts, if you have their contact details.

g. Cleaning

Premises must undergo cleaning following attendance of a confirmed case. Usual routine cleaning and disinfection practices are adequate.

Areas and equipment exposed to a confirmed case of COVID should be cleaned and disinfected. You need to clean spaces the case spent time in, however you do not need to clean areas that a case walked through (e.g., corridor).

Ensure hard surfaces are cleaned as well as any surface or equipment touched by a case (e.g., wipe down chairs sat on by the case, wipe down and change linen on used examination beds). It is not necessary to wash walls, windows or soft furnishings.

When cleaning and disinfecting:

- Use detergent and water followed by a disinfectant solution (2-step clean)
- OR
- Use a combined detergent and disinfectant solution (2-in-1 clean)

Refer to the manufacturer's instructions prior to cleaning equipment.

Usually SA Health does not require specialist cleaning to be sourced – this is at the discretion of the workplace.

h. Deciding if the premises needs to close

Premises will not be required to close unless:

- Advised by SA Health
- Cleaning cannot occur outside of business hours. The business can reopen as soon as the clean is completed.
- The business decides there is insufficient staff available to keep the business open

FOR STAFF

Table 1: Staff - Assessing the exposure risk in primary and community health care settings – vaccinated contacts (refer to Table 3 for further management)

Triggers: 80-90% vaccination coverage or as directed by the Chief Public Health Officer

		CONTACT TYPE		
		Lower Risk Scenario#	Medium Risk Scenario*	Higher Risk Scenario*
Vaccinated Contact		Face-to-face (<1.5m) outdoors for < 15 min OR Distanced (>1.5m) outdoors for any time OR Distanced (>1.5m) in any indoor space for < 1min OR Distanced (>1.5m) in an indoor space >30m ² for 1-15 min [^] OR Distanced (>1.5m) in an indoor space [^] >300m ² for >15mins <i>and does not meet the criteria for medium or higher risk</i>	Face-to-face (<1.5m) or direct physical contact for <1 min indoors OR Face-to-face (<1.5m) and prolonged (>15 min) outdoors OR Face-to-face (<1.5m) during AGBs. or AGPs [†] outdoors OR Distanced (>1.5m) in an indoor space [^] <30m ² for 1-15mins OR Distanced (>1.5m) in an indoor space >30-300m ² >15mins <i>and does not fit the criteria for higher risk</i>	Face-to-face (<1.5m) or direct physical contact for >1 min indoors OR Present during an AGP or AGB [†] in an indoor space <30m ² for any period of time OR Distanced (>1.5m ²) in an indoor space <30m ² for >15mins OR Contact with multiple COVID-19 cases
		PPE WORN BY STAFF MEMBER & CASE	Contact: No mask* Case: No mask*	Low risk casual contact (critical worker)
	Contact: Surgical mask*± eye protection [^] Case: No mask*	Low risk casual contact (critical worker)	Casual contact (critical worker)	Vaccinated close contact (critical worker)
	Contact: Surgical mask* ± eye protection [^] Case: Mask*	Low risk casual contact (critical worker)	Casual contact (critical worker)	Vaccinated close contact (critical worker)
	Contact: P2/N95* no eye protection [^] Case: ± Mask*	Low risk casual contact (critical worker)	Low risk casual contact (critical worker)	Casual contact (critical worker)
	Contact: P2/N95* with eye protection Case: ± Mask*	Low risk casual contact (critical worker)	Low risk casual contact (critical worker)	Low risk casual contact (critical worker)

* Mask refers to a surgical or cloth mask. Incorrect mask use or a face covering is to be considered the same as 'no mask'. P2/N95 must be fit checked at a minimum, and should be fit tested, otherwise it is considered surgical mask use.

† AGB = Aerosol generating behaviour (e.g. coughing). AGP = Aerosol generating procedure.

α Fully vaccinated is ≥14 days following 2nd dose

Examples of size of rooms: <30m² is space is small office, changing rooms, toilets, staffroom, sick bay; 30-300m² is large room, >300m² is sports hall, supermarket

^ Primary or community health professionals/ who are required to come within 1.5m of clients during the provision of health care, or handle COVID samples, are strongly recommended to wear eye protection to minimise transmission risk.

FOR STAFF

Table 2: Staff - Assessing the exposure risk in primary and community health care settings – unvaccinated contacts (refer to Table 3 for further management)

Triggers: 80-90% vaccination coverage or as directed by the Chief Public Health Officer

		CONTACT TYPE				
		Lower Risk Scenario [#] Face-to-face (<1.5m) outdoors for < 15 min OR Distanced (>1.5m) outdoors for any time OR Distanced (>1.5m) in any indoor space for < 1min OR Distanced (>1.5m) in an indoor space >30m ² for 1-15 min [^] OR Distanced (>1.5m) in an indoor space [^] >300m ² for >15mins <i>and does not meet the criteria for medium or higher risk</i>	Medium Risk Scenario* Face-to-face (<1.5m) or direct physical contact for <1 min indoors OR Face-to-face (<1.5m) and prolonged (>15 min) outdoors OR Face-to-face (<1.5m) during AGBs. or AGPs [†] outdoors OR Distanced (>1.5m) in an indoor space [^] <30m ² for 1-15mins OR Distanced (>1.5m) in an indoor space >30-300m ² >15mins <i>and does not fit the criteria for higher risk</i>	Higher Risk Scenario* Face-to-face (<1.5m) or direct physical contact for >1 min indoors OR Present during an AGP or AGB [†] in an indoor space <30m ² any period of time OR Distanced (>1.5m ²) in an indoor space <30m ² for >15mins OR Contact with multiple COVID-19 cases		
Unvaccinated Contact	Contact: No mask* Case: No mask*	Casual contact (critical worker)	Unvaccinated close contact (critical worker)			
	Contact: Surgical mask* ± eye protection [†] Case: No mask*	Casual contact (critical worker)	Unvaccinated close contact (critical worker)			
	Contact: Surgical mask* ± eye protection [†] Case: Mask	Casual contact (critical worker)	Unvaccinated close contact (critical worker)			
PPE WORN BY STAFF MEMBER & CASE	Contact: P2/N95* no eye protection [†] Case: ± Mask	Low risk casual contact (critical worker)	Low risk casual contact (critical worker) Case: Surgical mask	Casual contact (critical worker) Case: No mask	Casual contact (critical worker) Case: Surgical mask	Unvaccinated close contact (critical worker) Case: No mask
	Contact: P2/N95* with eye protection [†] Case: ± Mask*	Low risk casual contact (critical worker)	Low risk casual contact (critical worker)		Low risk casual contact (critical worker)	

* Mask refers to a surgical or cloth mask. Incorrect mask use or a face covering is to be considered the same as 'no mask'. P2/N95 must be fit checked at a minimum, and should be fit tested, otherwise it is considered surgical mask use.

[†] AGB = Aerosol generating behaviour (e.g. coughing). AGP = Aerosol generating procedure.

^α Fully vaccinated is ≥14 days following 2nd dose

[#] Examples of size of rooms: <30m² is space is small office, changing rooms, toilets, staffroom, sick bay; 30-300m² is large room, >300m² is sports hall, supermarket

[^] Primary or community health professionals/ who are required to come within 1.5m of clients during the provision of health care, or handle COVID samples, are strongly recommended to wear eye protection to minimise transmission risk.

FOR STAFF

Table 3. Staff contact risk management

	Low risk casual contact (critical worker)	Casual contact (critical worker)	Vaccinated close contact (critical worker)	Unvaccinated close contact (critical worker)
Quarantine	No Continue to work	Yes Leave workplace as soon as possible (end of shift) Quarantine only until initial negative test result is received	Yes Leave workplace as soon as possible Quarantine for 7 days from last exposure	Yes Leave workplace as soon as possible Quarantine for 14 days from last exposure
Testing	Usual surveillance testing as per industry requirements only, if applicable	Initial Test (PCR); may return to work following negative result AND Day 4 test (PCR) AND Day 6 test (PCR) AND Day 13 (PCR)	Initial test and Day 6 clearance PCR test Obtain a Day 13 surveillance test Test at first onset of symptoms on any day	Initial PCR and Day 6 PCR test and Day 13 clearance PCR test Test at first onset of symptoms on any day
Any contact who develops symptoms must get a throat-nose swab (PCR) and isolate until result is known and symptoms have resolved.				
Return to work	Can remain at work	If initial test is negative, may return to work and leave quarantine with the below requirements:	After 7 days with a negative Day 6 test.	After 14 days with a negative Day 13 test
Additional PPE Requirements on return to work?	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue testing regimen Wear surgical mask at all times Avoid non-essential contact with vulnerable populations outside of workplace Avoid non-essential activities Do not work across multiple sites, if possible Maintain social distancing outside of workplace Do not enter shared workspaces when not completing critical work (e.g. tea rooms, change rooms, food courts, offices, cars etc) 	May attend work from Days 8-14, under additional precautions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wear surgical mask at all times Do not work across multiple sites Do not enter shared workspaces when not completing critical work (e.g. tea rooms, change rooms, food courts, offices, cars etc) Avoid non-essential social activities Do not attend Covid Management Plan events Do not enter a high-risk setting outside of workplace Avoid contact with vulnerable populations outside of workplace 	Not applicable
Work across sites?	Yes Inform all employers of cross-site details.	Yes, but prefer limiting to a single site. Inform all employers of cross-site details.	No	Not applicable
If there is an outbreak at a workplace: limiting staff mobility across sites is advised				
Does my household need to quarantine	No	No	Yes – People in same household* as the contact who are unvaccinated must also follow the above quarantine and testing requirements (unless they can be appropriately separated from primary contact) No – People in same household as the contact who are vaccinated only need to get a test on day 1 and 6 (no quarantine).	Yes – People in same household* as the contact who are unvaccinated must also follow the above quarantine and testing requirements (unless they can be appropriately separated from primary contact) Yes – People in same household as the contact who are vaccinated need to quarantine for 7 days and get a test on day 1 and day 6 (unless they can be appropriately separated from primary contact) No – If the contact is under 12 years old, people in the same household who are vaccinated need to get a test on day 1 and 6 (no quarantine).

* Household is defined as residing in same dwelling overnight, intimate partners, and other household-like settings.

** Close contact separates from their household, then obtains a test. Once a negative result is received the remaining householders who are not close contacts can leave the premises and not return until completion of close contact's 7 or 14 days quarantine.

FOR VISITORS/PATIENTS

Risk assess members of the public who came in contact with a COVID positive case in your premises

These risk matrices should be used for members of the public who come in contact with a case while in a healthcare setting in the community e.g. in waiting rooms. It should not be applied to staff.

Contacts will be assessed as low risk casual contact, casual contact, vaccinated close contact and unvaccinated close contact using Tables 4, 5 and 6.

Table 4. Assessing the exposure risk for customers/clients with face-to-face contact (<1.5m) with a case


CONTACT IS VACCINATED 													
Distance	Touch (hugging, handshaking etc) or aerosol behaviours (singing, coughing etc), or contact with multiple COVID cases	<1.5 metres			>1.5 metres								
Exposure time		<1min	1-15mins	>15mins	<1 min	1-15mins		>15 mins			>1 hour		
Location						Outdoor	Indoor	Indoor	Outdoor	Indoor	Indoor	Indoor	Indoor
Room size							>100m ²	<100m ²		>300m ²	100-300m ²	<100m ²	<30m ²
Mask			Both wearing masks	One or both not wearing masks			Both wearing masks	One or both not wearing masks		Both wearing masks	One or both not wearing masks		
Outcome	Vaccinated close contact	Low risk casual contact	Casual contact	Vaccinated close contact	Low risk casual contact	Casual contact	Vaccinated close contact	Low risk casual contact	Casual contact	Vaccinated close contact			

Table 5: Assessing the exposure risk for customers/clients who were >1.5m from a case


CONTACT IS UNVACCINATED 													
Distance	Touch (hugging, handshaking etc) or aerosol behaviours (singing, coughing etc), or contact with multiple COVID cases	<1.5 metres			>1.5 metres								
Exposure time		<1min	1-15mins	>15mins	<1 min	1-15mins		>15 mins			>1 hour		
Location						Outdoor	Indoor	Indoor	Outdoor	Indoor	Indoor	Indoor	Indoor
Room size							>100m ²	<100m ²		>300m ²	100-300m ²	<100m ²	<30m ²
Mask													
Outcome	Unvaccinated close contact	Casual contact	Unvaccinated close contact		Casual contact	Unvaccinated close contact		Casual contact		Unvaccinated close contact			

Table 6. Managing the risk in members of the public with a COVID exposure in a primary or community health setting

	LOW RISK CASUAL CONTACT	CASUAL CONTACT	VACCINATED CLOSE CONTACT	UNVACCINATED CLOSE CONTACT
Quarantine requirements	None	Until first negative test	Quarantine for 7 days from exposure	Quarantine for 14 days from exposure
Testing requirements	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get tested immediately Get tested again on day 6 and 13 Get tested immediately at any time if symptoms develop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get tested immediately Get tested again on day 6 and 13 Get tested immediately at any time if symptoms develop (negative day 6 test required to be released from quarantine) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get tested immediately Get tested again on day 6 and 13 Get tested immediately at any time if symptoms develop (negative day 13 test required to be released from quarantine)
Any contact who develops symptoms must get a throat-nose swab (PCR) and isolate until result is known and symptoms have resolved.				
Other requirements	None	From days 1 to 14: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wear surgical mask when around others at all times Avoid contact with vulnerable people (elderly, pregnant, young children) Avoid non-essential activities where possible Avoid shared spaces and maintain physical distancing 	From days 8 to 14: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wear surgical mask when around others at all times Avoid non-essential activities Do not attend COVID Management Plan events Do not enter a high-risk setting (hospitals, aged care) except for essential reasons Avoid contact with vulnerable people (elderly, pregnant, people with chronic health conditions) Avoid shared spaces and maintain physical distancing 	Not applicable
Household quarantine requirements	None	None	<p>Yes – People in same household* as the contact who are unvaccinated must also follow the above quarantine and testing requirements (unless they can be appropriately separated from primary contact)</p> <p>No – People in same household as the contact who are vaccinated only need to get a test on day 1 and 6 (no quarantine).</p>	<p>Yes – People in same household* as the contact who are unvaccinated must also follow the above quarantine and testing requirements (unless they can be appropriately separated from primary contact)</p> <p>Yes – People in same household as the contact who are vaccinated need to quarantine for 7 days and get a test on day 1 and day 6 (unless they can be appropriately separated from primary contact)</p> <p>No – If the contact is under 12 years old, people in the same household who are vaccinated need to get a test on day 1 and 6 (no quarantine)</p>

Contact tracing for the public is conducted by SA Health. You will be categorised on a risk based assessment with consideration to your vaccination status, mask use, environment, activities taken and other epidemiological and environmental factors.

This is a general guide only. Additional testing and quarantine requirements may apply to individual cases based on a risk assessment.

Vaccinated refers to a person who is greater than 14 days following receipt of the final dose of a primary course of COVID-19 vaccine approved or recognised by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA).

Notes: COVID-19 tests for contacts must be PCR tests. This applies to children and adults of all ages.