

Coronavirus (COVID-19) and young people in care



A coronavirus guide for young people aged 13-18

What's coronavirus?


You've probably heard about COVID-19 more commonly referred to as coronavirus in the news. It's a virus that can spread easily from person to person and has changed the way we live our lives for now.


People with pre-existing medical conditions (like asthma), smokers and older people may experience more severe symptoms. Extreme measures, like limiting where we can go and who we can see, have been put into place to protect at-risk people.


For more information about coronavirus from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) [click here](#) and to download the Government app [click here](#).


 Facts	 Myths
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> It's a virus that spreads easily from person to person and infects your breathing system - our nose, throat and lungs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> It's just like the flu
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> It's passed from person to person through tiny droplets when people cough or sneeze. The droplets can be breathed in by others	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Young people can't catch it
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The droplets might land on surfaces, like phones, door handles, tables and hands	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The virus doesn't survive on surfaces and objects

What are the symptoms?

Fever (hot or cold body temperature) 

Coughing 

Sore throat 

Shortness of breath or having trouble breathing 

Tiredness 

If you feel sick and think you may have coronavirus, please let your carer, resi worker or case manager know. You can also take this [interactive self-assessment tool](#) or call the 24 hour, 7 day a week coronavirus hotline on 1800 675 398.

Coronavirus is new and the situation is like none we've been through before. Doctors, nurses and scientists are learning new information about it everyday, so information and restrictions may change.

[cfecfw.asn.au](https://www.cfecfw.asn.au)

@CFECFW

03 9614 1577

Level 5/50 Market Street, Melbourne, 3000

It's really important to get your information about coronavirus from a trusted source like [DHHS](#) and not from social media. There are plenty of scams and hoaxes on social media that have spread misinformation about coronavirus which causes confusion and anxiety about what is and isn't true.

How does it affect me?

Some of these frequently asked questions have been prepared by our friends at CREATE Foundation.

I am in foster care – What happens if I get sick with coronavirus?

It's important to remember that contracting coronavirus is pretty rare, even though we are hearing a lot about it on socials, in the news and through conversation. The **MOST IMPORTANT thing** is that if you start to feel sick, tell your carer or caseworker! They will have a plan for you.

If you are living independently then call this phone number 1800 020 080 and you will talk to an expert who can talk to you about how you are feeling and what to do next.

Will I be able to see my biological family, including siblings?

You can stay connected to people important to you that you don't live with, if you usually get to see them, but the way you stay connected will have to change for the next little while. So that we can prevent the spread of coronavirus your contact with family will change from meeting them in person to chatting on the phone or via FaceTime, Skype, Zoom, text or even good old fashioned letters in the post (don't worry, the current evidence shows that the virus doesn't survive on paper for longer than 24 hours)!

Talk to your caseworker about remote ways to have contact with your family through FaceTime or phone calls. If you need phone credit or access to data on your mobile phone ask your carer or worker if they can help you top up your credit.

In Victoria, face to face contact will be considered on a case by case basis, with most birth family contact to move to remote methods, and it **MUST** move to remote methods if either the birth family member or you are feeling sick with coronavirus symptoms.

This is going to be tough and face-to-face contact is very different than speaking on the phone or by videochat. If you feel sad or down about missing your family, that's okay. These restrictions have been put in place for now to keep people healthy and safe.

I am in residential care – Will there be many changes at my house because of coronavirus?

One saying you might start hearing quite a lot is 'Social Distancing'. Social distancing means increasing physical space between you and other people. It is important to exercise social distancing because coronavirus is most likely to spread by close contact with an infected person, or by contact with droplets from an infected person's cough or sneeze. So, the more space between you and others, the harder it is for the virus to spread.

The need to do Social Distancing could mean some changes to what happens in your home. In Victoria, the government has asked resi services to make sure that;

Everyone (young people, workers) will be discouraged from actions that involve contact with other people and/or their belongings – like sharing clothes or using another person's phone.

There might be a roster introduced where different children/young people are allowed into common areas (i.e the living room) at different times so that everyone's not close together all the time.

For the time being, transport and leaving the house more generally will only happen if it's really needed – this means any regular activities you do (e.g sport, music etc) probably won't be on – but remember this is only temporary! Some meetings with your support people will now need to happen via phone or video chat, not at the resi.

During this time it's really important you have a mobile phone and credit to make sure you can contact your important people and still feel connected to them.

Can I still see my caseworker?

Yes, you should still be having contact with them, your worker will still make contact with you regularly. This might not be face to face for now unless essential, but can be over the phone, through SMS, emails or online video conferencing. You should know who your worker is. If you don't know who this is, ask your carer or resi worker or call **13 12 78**.

Why do I have to stay home?

To try to stop coronavirus spreading and more people getting sick, the government has introduced new laws that mean we all have to stay home as much as possible.

It will be frustrating but it won't be forever. It's important to stay home to keep yourself, your mates and your loved ones safe. You might not get sick from coronavirus, but you might carry the virus without showing any symptoms at all and pass it onto your friend with asthma, someone who smokes and is at higher risk, someone who's immuno-compromised or has diabetes who could get really sick and even end up in hospital.

The quicker we stop the spread of coronavirus, the quicker we'll be able to get back to our regular lives.

What can I do if I'm bored or lonely?

The world is pretty weird right now because of coronavirus. If you're feeling overwhelmed or stressed by it all, that's a very normal response. It's important to go easy on yourself and to take time for self-care.

We've put together this list of self-care activities that you can do from where you live:

- [Stay active \(indoor exercise\)](#)
- [Take 10 to be zen](#)
- [Chat with your mates](#)
- [Check out our forums](#)
- [Make a homemade meal](#)
- [Take a break from the news](#)
- [Make a music playlist](#)
- [Declutter for five minutes](#)
- [Watch or read something uplifting](#)
- [Learn something new](#)

And if you're stressed or or feeling anxious, check out these [ways to relax](#). If you have a mental health plan, take the opportunity to speak to someone about how you're feeling. Work on your plan with a friend, a carer or case worker and check-in regularly.

If you don't have a mental health plan, you could speak to a worker about getting one. We've also added some more information in the **What support is there for me?** section below.

What can I do to help?

The best thing we can all do right now is stay put. It's going to be hard and boring at times, but the quicker we can contain coronavirus, the quicker life will go back to normal.

This means not leaving where you live, practicing good hygiene like regularly washing your hands, coughing into your elbow and not reusing tissues, and if you are outside, avoid touching your face, keeping at least 1.5 metres between you and your mates and letting someone know if you start to feel sick.

If you're living in resi, you can also help by keeping shared spaces clean, helping wipe down surfaces in the kitchen, lounge and bathroom with disinfectant.

What support is there for me?

Let's be real: so much about coronavirus is outside of our control. Not just the virus itself, but all the other parts of life that might be impacted, from work and money to going out and seeing mates. Give yourself credit as you cope with this tough time and recognise that dealing with this challenge can make you tougher.

As hard as things are, it can be comforting to know that you're not alone and that others share your feelings. A LOT of people are feeling stressed and anxious right now, particularly because of the uncertainty surrounding the situation. When you check in with your mates, take note of how they're feeling – it's likely that they're in the same boat as you.

Sometimes things can get overwhelming, even if you've been taking it easy. As most people will be physically distancing or self-isolating, a great option is telephone and online services. Lifeline (13 11 14) and Kids Helpline (1800 55 1800) can be accessed for phone and online counselling, with Lifeline phone counsellors on call from 7 pm to midnight, and Kids Helpline available 24/7. [Eheadsace](#) also offers free online and telephone support and counselling.

If it's available to you, you could consider seeing your GP or mental health professional for extra help (but make sure to follow the advice of [DHHS](#) if you're showing symptoms or are in self-isolation). You could also ask your mental health professional if they could chat over Skype/FaceTime if you're in self-isolation.

If you are feeling unwell, seek immediate medical attention by letting your carer, resi worker or caseworker know. You can call the 24 hour, 7 day a week coronavirus hotline of 1800 675 398.

You can also jump on [Sortli](#) for more information about what services are available.

This guide has been prepared with information from [DHHS](#), [ReachOUT](#) and our Young Leaders Collective of young people with a care and resi experience.

Disclaimer; This guide has been put together to assist young people in care. If you have any concerns about your health or wellbeing, please let your carer, case manager or resi worker know. The information is general in nature, represents captured learnings and is not a perspective guideline.

Protect yourself and your family

Cover your cough and sneeze



1

COVER your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.



2

Put your used tissue in the rubbish **BIN**.



3

If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, **NOT YOUR HANDS**.

WASH your hands with soap and running water. Dry your hands thoroughly with a disposable paper towel or hand dryer.

4



Stay germ free and healthy

Protect yourself and your family

Wash your hands regularly



1

Wet your hands.

Put soap on
your hands.

2



3

Rub the soap over all
parts of your hands for
at least 20 seconds.



4

Rinse your
hands under
running water.



5

Dry your hands thoroughly
with disposable paper towel
or hand dryer.



Stay germ free and healthy