
VIRAL INFECTION WITH CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) PATIENT INFORMATION



WHAT IS COVID-19?

COVID-19 is an infection due to the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The infection affects the lungs, but can cause other symptoms too. While some people have very mild illness there are others that develop more severe illness. A minority of people with COVID-19 become sick enough to need care in hospital.

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO WHEN DIAGNOSED WITH COVID-19?

If you have tested positive for infection with COVID-19 it is important to isolate from other people at home. This will reduce community spread of the virus as well as protect your family and friends from catching this infection from you. Below are details regarding symptoms and how to manage them at home, and where to seek follow up care should you need further medical assessment and help.

Notification of your positive test result will be sent to your local COVID health team (COVID Positive Care Pathways). They will be in contact with you in the coming days to answer any questions and review your clinical progress. Your COVID Positive Care Pathways follow-up will be able to provide you with access to any new treatments that are recommended during your COVID-19 infection as well as monitor your health until you are recovered.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19?

COVID-19 mainly affects the lungs, but can cause other symptoms too. While most people develop a fever and cough, some people have different symptoms. COVID-19 symptoms can include:

- Cough, sore throat, runny nose, sneezing
- Fever (sweating, shivering, chills)
- Abdominal cramps and diarrhoea
- Nausea and vomiting
- Feeling unwell and more tired (lethargy)
- Fast or difficult breathing or feeling short of breath
- Chest pain and generalised muscle aches in arms and legs (myalgias)
- Blue colour around the lips (cyanosis)
- Headaches
- Loss of normal taste and smell

A child may develop tiredness or be more irritable. Older persons may become confused, have falls or a general worsening of chronic medical conditions

HOME CARE

For some people, COVID-19 infections do not need any special care. In other cases, rest and medications for pain and fever such as paracetamol and/or ibuprofen may help with symptoms. It is important to maintain fluid intake. Anti-nausea medications such as Ondansetron are safe to take during COVID-19 infection to help with nausea and vomiting. A steroid inhaler called Budesonide has been shown to give some benefit in lung health during the first two weeks of COVID-19 infection. Your medications on discharge home from Cabrini Emergency Department (ED) include:

Medication	Dosage	Instructions	Indication for use
Paracetamol	500mg	Take ONE to TWO tablets orally every 4 hours as needed, max of 8 tablets in 24 hours	Pain or fever
Ibuprofen	200mg	Take ONE to TWO tablets orally every 6 hours as needed, max of 8 tablets in 24 hours	Pain or fever
Ondansetron	8mg	Take ONE tablet orally 8 hourly as needed	Nausea or vomiting
Budesonide Inhaler	200mcg	Take TWO puffs morning and night. Rinse mouth with water after inhalation. Continue until day 14 of COVID infection and then stop.	Assists in lung health during infection in the first 14 days.

Before you go home, your Cabrini ED doctor will review your clinical information to see if you are eligible to be referred to any current care programs to further assist in recovery from COVID-19 infection. Some treatments are only recommended for special patient groups. There are new developments and treatments being trialled worldwide for COVID-19. It is important to answer any calls from the COVID Positive Care Pathways team who can provide the latest advice regarding specific care that is right for you.

YOUR PULSE OXIMETER

As well as medications to take home we are providing a Pulse Oximeter for you to use at home. This monitors your oxygen levels and heart rate. Please follow the packaged instructions for how to set up and use your Pulse Oximeter. It is recommended to check the reading on the Pulse Oximeter three times per day, even if you do not feel unwell. It has been found that for some people, their oxygen levels and heart rate can give early signs of need to call for help, even when they have not felt sick enough to seek medical review.

1. Unpack the oximeter and follow the enclosed instructions on battery insertion and activation.
2. Open the device with the end hinge, where it says “push”, and clip onto one finger. Using the thumb or middle finger works best.
3. Place your finger with your fingernail face down into the main body of the device – so that your fingernail is closest to the luminescent red light. The reading is most reliable if there is no fingernail polish on the finger being used.
4. Take the device reading while resting your hand on your chest and keeping it still for at least five minutes. Wait until the numbers have stopped moving and become steady.
5. Do not leave the oximeter clipped on a finger for more than one hour at a time – the reading should take less than 10 minutes each time.
6. If the device stops working, please refer to the troubleshooting section of the device instructions. If this fails to resolve the issue then contact Cabrini ED for further advice on (03) 9508 1500.
7. The following table outlines what action you should take based on your oxygen levels and/or heart rate reading.

Oxygen level (%)	
95-100	Normal
90-94	Below normal – call your COVID hotline contact for advice and review
Below 90	Low oxygen – call 000 ambulance, report COVID positive and low SaO2%
Pulse rate (beats per minute)	
50-120	Normal range for most people
121-140	Above normal - call your COVID hotline contact for advice and review
Above 141	High heart rate – call 000 ambulance, report COVID positive and high heart rate

HOW LONG AM I CONSIDERED INFECTIOUS WITH COVID-19?

Patients are currently considered infectious from 48 hours prior to the onset of symptoms until they meet criteria for release from isolation. You will be advised by your COVID Positive Care Pathways team when you can expect this to occur.

SEEKING HELP

To provide medical care for patients with COVID-19 there are special designated hospitals where the right specialists and equipment has been made a priority. It is important when seeking further medical review and care that COVID-19 patients contact their local health service through the COVID hotline. This can make sure the help is specific for COVID-19 infection and not delayed by needing the patient to transfer from one hospital to another.

Cabrini is not currently designated by the Victorian Department of Health to admit COVID positive patients. Our region has a centralised service for COVID positive patients through The Alfred Hospital and Monash Medical Centre. Once you discharge home from Cabrini ED, your care will transfer to your local COVID Positive Pathways provider. They can be contacted through the Victorian Department of Health COVID hotline on 1800 675 398.

The Cabrini ED is staffed by experienced emergency doctors and nurses 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you have any questions about your treatment our qualified ED staff can be contacted on (03) 9508 1500 at any time. If you have more specific concerns and questions regarding COVID-19 these are best asked through the COVID hotline listed below.

You can expect to receive a phone call or SMS message from one of our emergency nurses the day after you have been discharged. The nurse will be able to clarify any aspect of your diagnosis, treatment, or follow-up.

In a medical emergency call the COVID hotline, or if more urgent call an ambulance – dial triple zero (000) – and notify the ambulance staff that you have tested COVID-19 positive.

Call for help if you:

- Feel very short of breath
- Are too short of breath to manage essential activities (such as getting around the house, eating, going to the toilet, sleeping)
- Become dizzy when you stand
- Become confused or drowsy
- Are not managing at home
- Otherwise have worsening symptoms
- Observe Pulse Oximeter readings that meet the relevant criteria to call for help as per the guideline table

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

- Contact the COVID hotline on **1800 675 398**
- Visit the Victorian Coronavirus Website at **www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus**
- Ask your local doctor or healthcare professional