



# Release from isolation

## Information for all clinicians

Updated 7 September 2021

Contact Public Health on **1300 316 555 (8am to 5pm, 7 days a week)** to discuss release from isolation (clearance) of all cases of COVID-19 infection or to advise public health about the discharge of a case from hospital.

A **clearance letter** will be provided to the individual by Public Health, which will confirm the date of release from isolation. Persons who have been released from isolation should adhere to hygiene and physical distancing measures, as the extent and duration of acquired immunity to COVID-19 is unknown.

People with COVID-19 may be managed in hospital or in the community, as clinically indicated. A person will be cleared for the purposes of release from isolation when certain criteria have been met, as per the [COVID-19 CDNA National Guidelines for Public Health Units](#).

### Confirmed cases who do not meet historical infection criteria

The following information applies to all confirmed cases, including those due to SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern. Cases can be released from isolation if they meet the appropriate criteria in any of points 1, 2, or 3 – whichever is applicable. Significantly immunocompromised cases will also need to meet additional criterion in point 4 to be released from isolation.

- Confirmed cases who have remained asymptomatic:** the case can be released from isolation if at least 14 days have passed since the first respiratory specimen positive for SARS-CoV-2 by PCR was taken and no symptoms have developed during this period.
- Confirmed cases with resolution of fever and acute respiratory symptoms:** the case can be released from isolation if they meet all the following criteria:
  - At least 14 days have passed since the onset of symptoms; and
  - there has been resolution of fever and substantial improvement of respiratory symptoms of the acute illness for the previous 72 hours.

- Confirmed cases without complete resolution of fever and acute respiratory symptoms:**

The case can be released from isolation if they meet both of the following criteria:

- At least 20 days have passed since the onset of symptoms; and
- the case is not significantly immunocompromised.

OR

The case can be released from isolation if they meet all the following criteria:

- At least 14 days have passed since the onset of symptoms;
- there has been resolution of fever for the previous 72 hours;
- there has been substantial improvement in respiratory symptoms of the acute illness; and

- the case has had two consecutive respiratory specimens negative for SARS-CoV-2 by PCR taken at least 24 hours apart after day 10 from symptom onset.

4. **Significantly immunocompromised persons:** the case can be released from isolation if, in addition to meeting the appropriate criteria described in points 1 and 2 above, they meet the additional criterion of a negative PCR on at least two consecutive respiratory specimens collected at least 24 hours apart after day 7 from symptom onset.

### Early release from isolation

When all clinical criteria are met for points 1 or 2 above, some cases may be eligible for early release from isolation after day 10 from symptom onset if:

- PCR is negative; or
- SARS-CoV-2 specific IgG, or total antibodies on serology, are detected in the absence of vaccination.

### Historical infections for which further isolation is not required

Some people who are asymptomatic may test PCR positive during their quarantine period, however their infection may have occurred at an earlier time and be 'historic' rather than acute. These scenarios might be due to acute infection but could also represent previous infection (i.e. intermittent/persistent SARS-CoV-2 shedding in a historical case).

If a person meets **all** the following criteria, it can be considered that their infection is historic, and they can be released from further isolation:

1. high PCR Ct results (or equivalent findings) on two specimens or with the second test negative, collected at least 24 hours apart, ideally processed via the same laboratory and platform; and
2. IgG or total antibodies detected via a validated laboratory serological test in the absence of recent vaccination; and
3. has had no new symptoms consistent with COVID-19 in the previous 14 days, or the symptoms are explained by either the detection of another respiratory pathogen or past SARS-CoV-2 infection that has met release from isolation criteria; and
4. has not had contact with a confirmed case in the 14 days prior to the first high PCR Ct result.

For persons who meet some but not all the above criteria, including when serology is not available, an expert reference panel may undertake case-by-case review to determine whether infection is historical.

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