



# Apartment Living & COVID-19 Best Practice Guideline

12 September 2022

## RESIDENTS

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# Apartment Living and COVID-19 for Residents

## Introduction

As Victoria has surpassed the 90 per cent full vaccination rate among the eligible population over 12 years of age and as booster vaccination rates continue to proliferate, most remaining public health restrictions have been lifted as of 24 June 2022, in accordance with the Victorian Government's [Roadmap to Reopening](#), and alignment with the [National Reopening Plan](#) set out by the Commonwealth Government.

This guide is designed to assist residents in apartment buildings with managing the ongoing risks of COVID-19 in Victoria.

With up to 25 per cent of the Victorian population already living in strata communities, including apartments, townhouses, and other types of strata complexes, if you live in strata, it is highly likely that someone living in your complex has tested positive for COVID-19.

As a result, this information is extremely relevant, and it remains a key to ensuring that we are able to afford each other consideration and respect during this next phase of what has been an unprecedented change to the way we live in strata.

We have compiled a thorough list of online resources to aid you, but for the most important single resource for further information about staying safe during COVID-19, please visit: <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/staying-safe>.

## About COVID-19 (Coronavirus – SARS-CoV2/2019-nCoV)

**COVID-19 is a respiratory disease spread between people.**

**Apartment buildings and other shared living spaces pose the potential risk of an infected resident spreading the virus to other residents. This is also known as community spread.**

### Common symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- Sore throat
- Runny nose
- Fever
- Coughing
- Fatigue/tiredness
- Shortness of breath
- Loss of sense of taste and/or smell

If you suspect that you may have COVID-19, please **call the Victorian Government's 24-Hour Coronavirus hotline on 1800 675 398** or visit [www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au](http://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au); **you must get tested and quarantine if you receive a positive diagnosis or test result.**

**In an emergency situation, please call 000.**

## COVIDSafe Settings Post-90% Full Vaccination

Find further information on COVIDSafe settings here: <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/how-we-live>.

### Shared facilities/non-essential common property

- Indoor and outdoor shared facilities/non-essential common property areas where people are likely to gather for extended periods of time, such as swimming pools, gymnasiums, cinemas, dining, and barbecue areas are open to all residents.
- QR code check ins via the Service Victoria App have been **phased out as of 11:59pm on Friday, 22 April 2022.**
- Face masks are **not required** to be worn within any indoor common property areas or shared facilities in apartment buildings.
- Individuals and organisations (including owners corporations) may consider additional measures suitable to their unique circumstances.

### Physical distancing

**Please continue be mindful of other residents when on common property and adhere to physical distancing where possible in areas such as hallways, stairwells, and lifts.**

## Identifying and Managing COVID-19 in Strata

### Responding to a confirmed case of COVID-19

The Victorian Department of Health can advise and assist an owners corporation committee and/or strata manager of a multi-unit dwelling if it has issued a notice to a person to quarantine due to a COVID-19 diagnosis, however, this no longer extends to contact tracing.

**We recommend calling the Victorian Government's Coronavirus Hotline on 1800 675 398 for further advice and information in the event of a quarantining resident or confirmed case of COVID-19.**

### Quarantine/self-isolation

**In Victoria, quarantine (also known as self-isolation) remains mandatory for people who are diagnosed with COVID-19 – this is currently five days after a positive test result, received either via PCR or Rapid Antigen Test (RAT).**

**Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 are required to notify workplace and social contacts upon confirmation of this fact.**

- **Close (household) contacts of a confirmed COVID-19 case are no longer required to quarantine as of 11:59pm on Friday, 22 April 2022, provided that they:**
  - Wear a mask indoors (apart from home),
  - Avoid sensitive settings, such as educational facilities, early childhood services, residential aged care and disability facilities, prisons, or hospitals (unless obtaining urgent medical care)
  - Social or workplace contacts of a confirmed COVID-19 case are only required to get a PCR or Rapid Antigen Test in the event they are presenting symptoms.
  - Social or workplace contacts of a confirmed COVID-19 case who are not presenting symptoms are **recommended, but not required** to use a daily Rapid Antigen Test for up to five days after exposure.
  - If you have been tested for COVID-19 via a PCR test, you must quarantine until you get a negative test result, and/or until your symptoms have resolved.
  - If you test positive on a Rapid Antigen Test, you are considered a probable COVID-19 case, and must follow the corresponding checklist and [report your result online](#), or call 1800 675 398.
  - If you are awaiting a test result, find out more details here: <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/getting-your-results-covid-19>.

## What does it mean to quarantine at home?

### **Quarantining at home means that you must stay at home:**

- You cannot leave home to go to work, school, or public areas, such as retail stores (**with limited exceptions**), cafes, or restaurants.
- You cannot travel on public transport, or in a taxi or rideshare (**with limited exceptions**).
- You must not have visitors at your home.
- You must remain quarantined at home until the Victorian Department of Health tells you it is safe to come out of isolation (five days).
- When quarantining, do not enter any communal areas such as pools, gyms, BBQ areas, rooftops, and any other shared spaces - **you must stay within the confines of your residence.**

### **During your quarantine period, you may only leave home for the following reasons:**

- To get medical care or medical supplies;
- To get a COVID-19 test;
- In case of emergency (**including fire or flood**);
- Escaping the risk of harm (**including family violence**), and
- **Transporting a household member to attend\*:**
  - **Work**
  - **Education**
  - **A health appointment**
  - **To obtain essential food supplies.**

**\*You must travel directly to and from the location, wear a face mask and not leave the vehicle unless you are required to take that person to the location, it is an emergency, or it is required by law.**

## Should residents disclose to the owners corporation that they have contracted COVID-19?

### **Residents may inform the owners corporation if they are confirmed as having been diagnosed with COVID-19; however, they should only share this information if doing so is reasonably necessary for preventing or managing further spread of the virus:**

- Knowledge of a positive case enables the owners corporation to notify any of the service contractors who may be impacted by the circumstance of an infected resident and give them [the contractors] the opportunity to manage their own Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) and other measures as required. For example, they may be the waste management providers removing your rubbish for you, or the Building Manager delivering your mail.
- Owners corporations in Victoria have a duty of care to maintain common property and to ensure a safe environment for anyone attending the property, either as a visitor, or to undertake work. As all lot owners share the common property as tenants in common, those duties for disclosure will extend to you as an owner-occupier, or landlord.

**SCA (Vic) recommends all residents, and their visitors, undertake best practice to provide a duty not to cause a hazard, or interfere with quiet enjoyment of the common property.**

## Looking after pets in quarantine

### **Although our pets aren't getting sick, COVID-19 is changing the lives of pets, especially for dogs living in apartments:**

- Under quarantine, pets in apartments are going to need to do their business inside; if you use your balcony or shower for this, please collect and dispose of waste properly, and not wash it down the drain system. After toileting, disinfect the affected area.
- Make sure you keep up all flea treatments as well. You don't need a flea outbreak at this time within the building.
- When you become anxious, or things change, you might see an uptick in depressive behaviour from your pet like trouble sleeping, loss of appetite, not wanting to play or seeming listless. Other pets might also become more destructive and anxious, exhibiting behaviour such as increased reactivity, increased barking or noise, or difficulty settling. Try to set up a routine within your dwelling and stick to it.

- There is currently no evidence of humans contracting COVID-19 from pets. There is also no evidence that companion animals play a role in the spread of the virus.
- For some other great tips for caring for your pets during COVID-19 visit [RSPCA Australia](#).

## Powers of Owners Corporation Committees

The Committee are responsible for the management of the common areas and facilities and may need to create additional policies to manage risks in the event of a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case.

### These new policies may include:

- **Delivery of parcels to a particular unit/s** – quarantining residents may instruct a courier to meet outside or in the lobby area, and not come up to the apartment. If a resident is unable to leave their apartment, arrangements may need to be made with the committee for others to assist.
- **Visitors and visitors parking** – to manage the risk of exposure to other residents, the committee may recommend restriction on the use of visitor's carparks by essential services such as doctors and medical services as a priority, etc.
- **Rubbish/waste** – quarantining residents may be asked not to use the chute or rubbish room and to double bag the rubbish from bins, for instance.
- **Mail** – the committee may ask a quarantining resident to make alternative arrangements for the delivery of mail.
- **Shared facilities** – the committee may determine new access times (hours of operation and closure) of shared community facilities. Facilities such as pools and gyms may also be closed if required.
- **Shared laundry facilities** – restricted use and/or closure of facilities may extend to communal laundries if residents do not adhere to protective measures such as disinfecting all surfaces of the machines they use. Maintain social distancing where possible when using shared laundry facilities.
- **Meeting & Communication** – the committee may implement new meeting and communication protocols to minimise the potential spread of the virus and enable decisions of the Strata Community to continue to be made by an alternative means; *e.g., teleconference, on-line meetings, ballots.*
- **Building Maintenance & Services** – the committee may determine to increase or reduce services to the building to minimise risks to residents; *e.g., increase cleaning regime, increase waste collection if all residents are staying home and the rubbish generated increases, employ security guards if there is a power failure and the entry/exit security systems stops working or garage doors etc.*

## Government Information & Resources – Useful Links

### Website

<https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au>

### Staying Safe

<https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/staying-safe>

### COVIDSafe Settings

<https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-covidsafe-settings>

### Getting Tested

<https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/getting-tested>

### What to do if you have COVID-19

<https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/what-to-do-if-you-have-covid-19>

### Face Masks

<https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/face-masks>

### Vaccination

[COVID-19 vaccines \(vic.gov.au\)](https://www.vic.gov.au/covid-19-vaccines)

### Isolation and quarantine – extra help and support

<https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/isolation-and-quarantine-extra-help-and-support>

### Mental Health Resources – Coronavirus (COVID-19)

<https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/mental-health-resources-coronavirus-covid-19>

### Financial and other support for COVID-19

<https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/financial-and-other-support-coronavirus-covid-19>

### Tenants - Coronavirus (COVID-19) and your rights

<https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/resources-and-tools/advice-in-a-disaster/coronavirus-covid19-and-your-rights>

### Privacy

<https://www.oaic.gov.au/updates/covid-19-advice-and-guidance/>

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Please visit [www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au) for regular updates.

## 24/7 Coronavirus Hotline

If you suspect you may have COVID-19 call the dedicated hotline – open 24 hours, 7 days.

 **1800 675 398**

Please keep Triple Zero (000) for emergencies only.

## Apartment Living and COVID-19

12 September 2022