

# Management of COVID-19 after the Public Health Emergency

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From 1 July 2022, there will no longer be a public health emergency declaration in response to COVID-19, in Tasmania.

**COVID-19 will still need to be managed carefully. Ongoing management of COVID-19 will be through Orders under the *Public Health Act 1997*.**

This factsheet provides information about ongoing management of COVID-19 in Tasmania and individual and workplace responsibilities.

## What is staying the same?

- COVID-19 is still a risk. However, because most people in Tasmania are vaccinated, Tasmania has one of the lowest rates of severe illness and death from COVID-19 in the world.
- People with COVID-19 will still have access to information, support and care they need.
- COVID-19 will still be managed under the *Public Health Act 1997* (the Public Health Act) and will still be a notifiable disease - that means positive test results still need to be reported.
- People who test positive to COVID-19 will still be required to isolate for at least seven days from the date of their positive result.
- There will still be restrictions in place for people who are close contacts of people who test positive to COVID-19.
- Rapid antigen tests (RATs) and PCR laboratory testing will still be available for people with symptoms and close contacts.
- People at risk of severe illness from COVID-19 should get tested as soon as any symptoms develop, so they can access medications to reduce the risk.
- It will still be important to be COVID-safe, to protect ourselves and each other. This includes:
  - › staying up to date with COVID-19 vaccination
  - › staying home and getting tested for COVID-19 if you have any COVID symptoms
  - › wearing face masks when or where risks are higher, such as in public indoor settings; when physical distancing is not feasible; when spending time with a person at risk of severe illness or in a high-risk setting; and if you are a close contact of someone who has COVID-19
  - › washing or sanitising hands regularly, especially after coughing/sneezing, eating, drinking and before touching your face

- › covering all coughs and sneezes, with a tissue or the inside of the elbow
- › physical distancing from others, when possible.
- Employers will still be required to provide safe workplaces under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2012* and manage COVID-19 as a hazard. Employers will implement and maintain COVID-safety controls according to workplace risk assessments.
- Public Health will continue to monitor case, hospitalisation, death numbers and rates, and support outbreak management in high risk and priority settings.

## What is changing?

The Tasmanian Director of Public Health declared a public health emergency in March 2020, under the Public Health Act. The public health emergency declaration enabled the Director of Public Health to make broad public health directions under the Act quickly, including to:

- require isolation and quarantine of cases and contacts
- restrict gatherings, movement and travel
- require workplace COVID safety plans
- mandate vaccination and use of face masks in certain circumstances.

The rapid response saved lives and protected the health system until the population was vaccinated.

When the public health emergency declaration ends, the Director of Public Health will regulate and manage COVID-19 using ordinary powers, rather than emergency powers, under the Public Health Act. There are 76 other diseases that the Director of Public Health already regulates using ordinary powers under the Act.

Directions relating to the isolation of cases (people who test positive to COVID-19), requirements of close contacts, management of large events, and the use of face masks on aircraft will be replaced by enforceable public health orders and guidelines under the Public Health Act.

There will no longer be a requirement for employers to document COVID-19 control measures in a Workplace COVID Safety Plan but Public Health continues to recommend this as best practice.

Best practice guidance will also replace current directions requiring:

- vaccination for workers in certain settings
- use of facemasks in certain high-risk settings
- management of risk in high-risk settings including residential aged care facilities and cruise ships.