



Home Visits Risk Assessment Tool and Risk Minimisation Guidelines

Conducting home visits safely during the
COVID-19 pandemic

May 2020

I. About the Home Visits Risk Assessment Tool and Risk Minimisation Guidelines

I.1. Purpose of this document

This tool is for organisations that provide home care services as part of their core business.

The purpose of tool is to identify risks and develop mitigation strategies for home visits during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The objectives are to:

- ensure clients continue to receive the in-home care and support they need without increased risk of exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19
- ensure healthcare and disability workers and other support workers are not exposed to COVID-19 during home visits
- provide clarity to stakeholders about COVID-19 risk assessment and mitigation strategies, including appropriate infection prevention and control guidelines for this setting.
- support identification and implementation of alternative service provision models during the COVID-19 pandemic to maximise safety without loss of service level or quality.

The intended outcomes from using this tool are:

- continued safe provision of homecare services
- a confident, safe workforce delivering home care services.

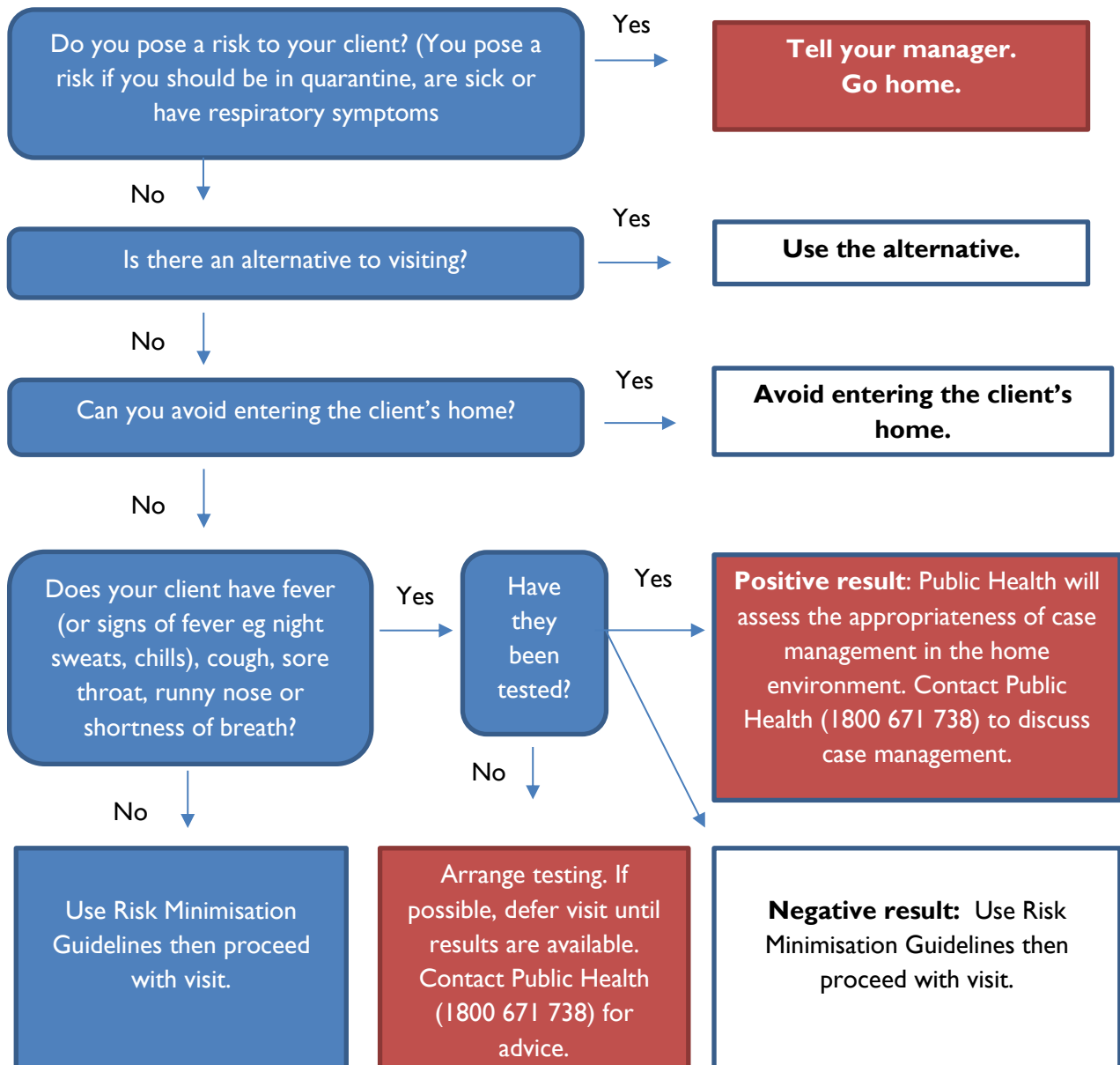
I.2. Key points

- If you are sick or have respiratory symptoms, don't visit. Go home.
- If you don't have to visit, don't. Make a phone call instead.
- If you don't have to enter a person's home, don't.
- If you are delivering goods or equipment, arrange to leave them in a safe place outside and phone your client to ensure they collect them.
- If you need to enter a person's home, phone first to assess the level of risk.
- If your client has no symptoms of COVID-19 and has not been instructed by Public Health Services to quarantine at that time (eg has not recently had close contact with someone known to have COVID-19), personal protective equipment (PPE) is not required. Stringent hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and maintaining at least 1.5 metres distance whenever possible, is important.
- If your client has been tested for COVID-19 and is waiting for their result or tested positive to COVID-19 or is in quarantine, additional infection prevention and control measures are necessary to protect carers from exposure to the virus. This includes the use of PPE.

I.3. How to use the Home Visits Risk Assessment Tool and Risk Minimisation Guidelines.

Use the Risk Assessment Tool before every client visit, every time.

2. Risk assessment tool



2.1. Do you pose a risk to your client?

(This question must be answered by the person visiting the client.)

You must not provide home care if you have:

- returned from overseas or interstate in the last 14 days you should be in quarantine – tell your manager and go home
- been in close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 in the last 14 days – you should be in quarantine; tell your manager and go home
- a fever (or signs of fever, including night sweats or chills), or any symptoms of respiratory illness (eg cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny nose) you should not be at work and might need to be tested; tell your manager and contact your GP or the Public Health Hotline (1800 671 738) to arrange testing.

Influenza vaccination is also highly recommended and helps protects you and your client from influenza.

2.2. Do you need to visit the client's home? Is there an alternative to visiting?

(This question can be answered by a service manager or the person doing the visit.)

Can you phone, send an email or write a letter instead of visiting? If you don't have to visit, don't.

2.3. Can you avoid entry to the client's home?

(This question can be answered by a service manager or the person doing the visit.)

If you are visiting only to deliver goods or equipment, phone ahead and ask your client where you can leave the items safely outside, eg on the doorstep or in the letterbox.

After delivering the items, phone the client to check they have collected the items.

2.4. If you cannot avoid entering the client's home, call ahead to assess the risk

(This section can be actioned by a service manager or the person doing the visit.)

Call ahead before visiting and ask your client the following questions. NOTE: If your client is unable to reliably answer these questions (for example they have early-stage dementia), you may need to contact their primary health carer.

1. Have you been told by Public Health to be in quarantine or to self-isolate?

If yes, delay the visit. If the visit cannot be delayed, follow infection prevention and control guidelines below. See Section 3.3.

If no, proceed to next question.

2. Have you had close contact with someone known to have COVID-19 in the past 14 days?

If yes, delay the visit and, if the patient is not already in quarantine, instruct/help the client to call Public Health Services, phone 1800 671 738 straight away. If the visit cannot be delayed, follow infection prevention and control guidelines. See Section 3.3.

If no, proceed to next question.

3. Do you have any cold or flu-like symptoms or have you been tested recently for COVID-19 (this is referred to as suspect case)?

- Fever (or signs of fever, eg night sweats, chills)?
- Cough, sore throat, runny nose, shortness of breath?

If yes, if the client has *any* symptoms (even mild), ask if they have been tested for COVID-19.

If they have not been tested, instruct/help them to arrange testing through their GP or the Public Health Hotline (1800 671 738). If possible, delay the visit until the results are known. If the visit cannot be delayed, follow infection prevention and control guidelines. See Section 3.3.

If they have been tested and are waiting on results, they are considered a 'suspect case'. Delay the visit if possible, until results are known. If the visit cannot be delayed, follow infection prevention and control guidelines. See Section 3.3.

If the client has been tested *since developing these symptoms* and the result was negative, proceed with the risk minimisation tool.

If no, arrange a time to visit and instruct the client to stand well back from the door when they let you in. Read the Risk Minimisation Guidelines.

3. Risk Minimisation Guidelines

(This section is vital guidance for the person doing the visit.)

If the initial risk assessment shows a home visit is appropriate and necessary and you need to enter the client's home, consider ways to minimise the risk to your client and yourself.

3.1 For all visits, take steps to protect your client and yourself.

1. Wash your hands or use alcohol-based hand rub before entering the home.
2. Keep 1.5 metres distance between yourself and others in the home, whenever possible.
3. Cover coughs and sneezes with the inside of your elbow or a tissue; put the tissue straight in the bin, then wash your hands or use alcohol-based hand rub.
4. Wash your hands with soap and warm, running water (or alcohol-base hand rub) after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose.
5. Remind your client to stand well back when they open the door, to allow you to enter.

3.2 Does your client need to be in the room with you?

If you are delivering an item that cannot be left outside or providing cleaning or other services where it is not necessary for your client to be in the room, consider asking your client to wait in another room while you're in the house, or asking the client to stand well back (at least 1.5 metres or two large steps) while you work; remember you may be the only person they see this week.

For example, if you need to deliver a large item (eg walker or commode), phone ahead and arrange for your client to open the door then stand 1.5 metres away from you while telling you where to put the item. If you're cleaning the bathroom, ask your client to stay in another room. Try to limit the number of times your client needs to change rooms if mobility is an issue.

3.3 When and how to use infection prevention and control measures

The infection prevention and control measures required vary depending on:

- the activities being undertaken by the carer and whether 1.5 metres distancing can be maintained
- the duration of the visit
- the risk of contact with blood and other body fluids
- whether the client has risk factors for having COVID-19, eg they are in quarantine, unwell, have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or are waiting for COVID-19 test results.

See the tables in section 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 for detailed guidance on infection prevention and control measures for various scenarios.








3.3.1 Infection prevention and control when caring for a person who is very unlikely to have COVID-19

If you are delivering care to someone **who is very unlikely to have COVID-19**, use the infection prevention and control guidelines outlined in Table 1.

This is for people who:

- are **not** in quarantine
- are **not** unwell
- have **not** been diagnosed with COVID-19, and
- are **not** waiting for COVID-19 test results.

Table 1: Infection prevention and control measures for clients who are very unlikely to have COVID-19

For use when:	 Hand hygiene	 Gloves	 Surgical mask	 P2/N95 respirator	 Eye protection (safety glasses/ goggles/ face shield)	 Disposable fluid repellent gown	 Plastic apron
Providing care that involves touching the client or contact with blood or bodily fluids eg dressing and showering.	✓	✓	Only if there is risk of splash to the carer's face from blood or bodily fluids.	✗	Only if there is risk of splash to the carer's eyes from blood or bodily fluids.	Only if there is risk of splash to the carer's body from blood or body fluids.	
Providing non-contact care or support.	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	

Thank you to the Victorian Government Department of Health and Human Services for permission to reproduce the purple icons in Table 1 and 2.








3.3.2 Infection prevention and control when caring for a person who has or might have COVID-19

If you are entering the home of someone **who has or might have COVID-19**, use the infection prevention and control measures outlined in Table 2. You must also complete online Australian Government COVID-19 Infection Control Training, available at www.covid-19training.gov.au/

People who have or might have COVID-19 are:

1. People in quarantine
2. People who are sick with flu-like or respiratory symptoms – fever (or signs of fever eg night sweats, chills), cough, sore throat or shortness of breath – who have not been tested for COVID-19
3. People who are waiting for COVID-19 test results
4. People who have tested positive to COVID-19 and not yet been released from isolation by Public Health Services.

Table 2: Infection prevention and control measures for clients who **have risk factors** for having COVID-19

For use when:	 Hand hygiene	 Gloves	 Surgical mask	 P2/N95 respirator	 Eye protection (safety glasses/ goggles/ face shield)	 Disposable fluid repellent gown	 Plastic apron
Providing care that involves touching the client or contact with blood or bodily fluids eg dressing and showering	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
Providing non-contact care or support when 1.5 metres distance cannot be maintained or if visit is for longer than 2 hours	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Providing non-contact care or support when 1.5 metres distance can be maintained, and the visit is for less than 2 hours.	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗

3.4 Sequence for putting on and removing PPE

Please use the following resources for instructions on putting on and removing PPE safely.

- Personal protective equipment for contact and droplet precautions (Department of Health (Tas) 2020) available at www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0035/87974/PPE-for-Contact-and-Droplet-Precautions.pdf
- Video on PPE for droplet and contact precautions (Department of Health (Tas) 2020), available at <https://youtu.be/JKBfRHG5X90>

3.5 Where can I get more information?

The Australian Government Department of Health:

- [Guide for Home Care Providers](#) (includes information about the correct use of PPE)
- Information sheet on [When to use personal protective equipment \(PPE\) in aged care](#)
- Information sheet for [In-home Care Workers](#)
- [Covid-19 infection control training](#)