

COVID-19 VICTORIA FAQs

METRO MELBOURNE AND REGIONAL VICTORIA | SEPTEMBER 26, 2022



As we continue to live with COVID-19, there are important steps you should take to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 and protect yourself and those who are most at risk.

The risk of catching or passing the infection to others is higher if you are not up to date with your vaccinations, when you are in close contact with the person infected with COVID-19, lack basic hygiene, or if you spend time in poorly ventilated or crowded indoor settings.

The following are current government guidelines and recommendations.

COVIDSafe settings

As you live and work, remember these COVIDSafe principles:

- The work-from-home recommendation was lifted as of Sept 1 2022, however:
 - Employers and staff may still consider remote working arrangements that are most appropriate for their workplace and employees based on individual requirements.
 - It is always important that any employee who has COVID symptoms does a rapid antigen test and stays home.
 - To help keep their employees safe, businesses or organisations with on-site operations (including home-based businesses) need to have a COVIDSafe Plan which is regularly reviewed to ensure it's as up to date as possible.
 - Businesses and workers are encouraged to consider OH&S requirements and compliance to mandatory COVID-19 requirements when planning return to work arrangements for their workplaces.
- Face masks are strongly recommended if you:
 - are on public transport, in taxis/rideshare services and in tourism vehicles
 - are in an indoor setting
 - can't physically distance, such as at entry or exit points to large events
 - have any COVID-19 symptoms, though you should remain home, or
 - are with people who may be vulnerable to COVID-19.

People who are at risk of severe COVID illness are encouraged to wear a mask whenever in public.

- Face masks are mandatory for everyone aged 8 years and above in the following settings:
 - while visiting a hospital, care facility or any other indoor space that is publicly accessible in a healthcare setting, including allied health settings
 - while working in an indoor space that is a publicly accessible area of a court or justice centre
 - while working in a resident-facing role in an indoor space at a care facility, including when not interacting with residents
 - while working in an indoor space at a prison, police gaol, remand centre, youth residential centre, youth justice centre or post-sentence facility
 - after being tested for COVID-19 and awaiting results
 - while outside your premises, if you have COVID-19 or are a close contact and are permitted to leave your premises.
- There are no vaccination requirements for patrons to enter any venues, but vaccination requirements are still in place for **select workers**.
- Schools, childcare centres, and early childhood education are open.
- Get your next COVID-19 vaccine dose as soon as you are eligible. It is strongly recommended you have three doses of the vaccine for the best protection. Some people may be eligible for a fourth dose, while children 5-11 are recommended to have two doses.
- If you have symptoms of COVID-19, you should get tested. If you test positive on a rapid antigen test, you must **report your result** and isolate for five days.
- If you have COVID-19, or you are a contact of someone who does, read **Your COVID Checklist** for what to do. You must follow the checklist, including isolating if required.

Visiting hospitals

All workers and all visitors aged 8 and over must wear a face mask indoors, unless excepted. Hospitals may apply their own COVIDSafe settings based on local needs. Check in advance before visiting.

Continued P2





Visiting care facilities

There are no visitor caps for residential aged care homes.

Visitors must be tested and receive a negative result before visiting a care facility through:

- a rapid antigen test on the day of the visit. This test does not need to be taken at the care facility, or
- a PCR test within 24 hours prior to the visit.

Visitors who do not test can only enter the care facility for limited reasons:

- end of life visit
- urgent support for a resident's immediate physical, cognitive, or emotional wellbeing, where it is not practicable for the person to undertake a rapid antigen test prior to entering the care facility
- to provide professional patient care.

You must wear a mask, unless excepted.

You must not visit a care facility to see residents if you:

- tested positive for COVID-19
- have COVID-19 symptoms
- have had contact with a confirmed case outside the home and are waiting for a COVID-19 PCR test result.

COVIDSafe Gatherings

When organising or attending gatherings, consider ways to reduce the risk of getting and spreading COVID-19. Take extra precautions if someone has a higher chance of developing severe illness or complications from COVID-19 (including those not up to date with their vaccinations).

If after attending a gathering you learn you have COVID, or that someone you were with had COVID, follow the [COVID Checklist](#) to help keep yourself and others safe.

Checklist for attending a gathering

Follow these steps before and while you attend a small or large gathering:

- preferably, be up to date with your COVID-19 vaccinations
- take a rapid antigen test if you are visiting someone who is at a high-risk of severe illness from COVID-19
- stay home if you are sick or experiencing COVID-19 symptoms
- maintain a physical distance of 1.5m from each other
- wear a face mask in a space (indoor or outdoor) where you cannot physically distance

- spend more time outdoors than indoors. Avoid poorly ventilated spaces, crowded indoor settings and prolonged contact with others
- clean your hands with soap and water regularly. Carry a hand sanitiser with you
- always cover your cough and sneeze into a tissue or a bent elbow
- keep a note of people you have visited in a gathering so you can contact them in case you get COVID-19.

Checklist for hosts

This checklist is essential for hosting events or group gatherings including religious gatherings:

- does your space/venue have ventilation? If it is an indoor gathering, have good ventilation with open doors and windows, and minimise your time to under four hours
- avoid your guests being in close contact with each other - try to create ways for people to physically distance (1.5 metres)
- do not share plates, glasses, or cutlery as this increases the risk of transmission
- keep a list of people who attended your gathering in case this is needed for contact tracing purposes
- make sure there is access to soap and water or sanitiser, especially after any physical contact with others, and before preparing, serving, and eating food
- invited guests who feel unwell should get tested and quarantine until they receive a negative result. If you wish, look into options to have them join your event virtually
- recommend those without symptoms take a rapid antigen test before arriving.

Hygiene, ventilation and physical distancing

Hygiene

Good hygiene is critical for slowing the spread of COVID-19. Everyone should be taking the following hygiene actions:

- wash your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds, using soap and water or use a hand sanitiser that contains at least 60 percent alcohol
- wash your hands when you get home, arrive at other people's homes, at venues or at work
- wash your hands after blowing your nose, coughing, sneezing, or using the toilet
- cover your nose or mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, then throw it away and wash your hands. If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or upper sleeve

Continued P3





- avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- if you are wearing a face mask, leave it on
- do not share drink bottles, glasses, crockery, or cutlery other than with people you live with
- remember to clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces regularly.

Ventilation

Bringing outdoor air into your home or business helps keep COVID-19 virus particles from accumulating inside.

- if it is safe, open as many doors and windows as possible to bring outdoor air into your home. While it is better to open windows as wide as possible, even having a window open slightly can help
- leave doors open in hallways and corridors
- fans improve air flow even without an open window. If you are using a ducted system or air conditioner, change the filter regularly according to the manufacturer's instructions
- turn ceiling fans on a low setting or use a pedestal fan in 'swing' mode to help air circulate, and clear corners where virus particles may gather
- run evaporative coolers or ducted heating systems once or twice a day in fan-only mode to flush rooms with outside air
- if possible, consider a portable air clearer or purifier for frequently used rooms with no windows as they can help reduce airborne contaminants in a confined space.

Maintain your physical distance

- Greet people with a smile or wave - do not shake hands, hug, or kiss as a greeting.
- Stay 1.5 metres away from people where you can.
- Avoid crowds, especially indoors.
- When waiting in line or walking through busy areas, be patient, give others space so they can give you yours.

THESE COVID FAQs are prepared with great care, based on the best available advice at the time they are written. We try to provide guidance as soon as possible to give all councils of the church time to act in accordance with Covid-safe requirements. However whenever restrictions change, the detail is increasingly either absent from government information or is updated after these FAQs are published. Where this is the case, we deliberately err on the side of caution.

For further information visit: <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au>. **Should you have any further questions please email** Synod's Crisis Management Team.

MULTI-LINGUAL RESOURCES

Where can I find the current government guidelines in other languages?

Victorian Multi-cultural Commission Coronavirus (COVID-19): In-language advice and information at <https://www.multiculturalcommission.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-language-advice-and-information>.

Ethnolink have information available in 51 languages at: <http://www.ethnolink.com.au/covid-%2019-coronavirus-translated-resources/>

The Department of Home Affairs has extensive multi-lingual resources available at: <https://Covid19inlanguage.homeaffairs.gov.au/>

The Victorian Multicultural Commission have release multi-lingual resources including:

- Audio messages: <https://cloud.think-hq.com.au/s/m9SX3ntGGqr7Sai>
- Posters (JPG / PDF): <https://cloud.think-hq.com.au/s/m9SX3ntGGqr7Sai>
- Social Media banners: <https://cloud.think-hq.com.au/s/m9SX3ntGGqr7Sai>

MINISTERS IN HIGH RISK GROUPS

Ministers in high-risk groups should discuss with their medical practitioners, presbytery and Church Councils the appropriateness of their involvement in services and what additional safeguards may be required to protect their own health.

High risk groups include people who are:

- aged over 70,
- over 65 with chronic health conditions,
- immune-compromised, or
- Indigenous people over 50 with chronic health conditions

As of 28/10/2021





CHURCH/COMMUNITY HALLS

Community Facilities, including libraries, creative art spaces, halls may open without restriction, but must have a COVID-safe plan in place.

RENTED & HIRED FACILITIES

- If you rent hire or licence out property to more than one organisation or group on a casual or non-exclusive basis (eg support groups, community groups, classes) using our standard Hire Agreement (Victoria) whether one-off or recurring, the Responsibility for maintaining all COVID-19 compliance remains with the congregation as the responsible body. However, you may pass on the reasonable additional cost of cleaning or other necessary Covid-19 safety measures to the Hirer if you notify them in advance of the additional cost.
- If you rent out property to one organisation or group on an exclusive use basis (under a Lease or Licence), the responsibility for maintaining all COVID-19 compliance falls to the tenant.
- If in doubt, seek advice from your presbytery or contact crisismanagement@victas.uca.org.au

As of 23/04/2022

COVID-SAFE PLANS

Do we need to complete a CovidSafe plan and/or UCA Covid Recovery Action Checklist?

With most COVID-19 restrictions now removed, rather than continuing to use the UCA's Covid Recovery Action Checklist, it is now recommended to use the state government's simplified CovidSafe plan template available from www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/covidsafe-plan.

You must be able to provide a copy immediately if requested by any authorised Health officer. There are substantial fines for every breach of current COVID-safe requirements, for which the congregation will be liable.

HOLY COMMUNION

How can Holy Communion services reflect COVID safe practices?

Careful consideration should be given to how Holy Communion can be conducted appropriately, including maintaining distance, hygiene and not sharing communion ware.

For congregations livestreaming worship, the Assembly guidelines remain in place until July 2022 and can be found at: <https://uniting.church/online-worship-communion/>

For some thoughts on how to conduct Holy Communion in a COVID-safe manner read Rev Dr Sally Douglas' November 2020 article at <https://victas.uca.org.au/how-can-we-keep-holy-communion-covid-19-safe/>.

As of 19/11/2021

ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING LICENCES

What does it cost for a Zoom meeting licence?

If you plan on using Zoom frequently and/ or require full functionality, Synod Ministries and Operations along with other Synods have negotiated with Zoom to purchase a bulk deal. As such we are able to provide Zoom licences for a cost of just \$7.93 per month. If your presbytery or congregation is interested, please contact: George.Delice@victas.uca.org.au

You will need to provide: Number of licences required and the details of the contact person (including their email address).

As of 08/07/2020





OP SHOPS

Op Shops run by Uniting VicTas must follow guidance issued by Uniting.

- **As of 11:59pm Friday June 24** the government will no longer require all staff and volunteers to be double-vaccinated. However, "Employers can consider setting COVID-19 vaccination policies as part of their own workplace conditions", so please consider the appropriateness of maintaining vaccination requirements within your OpShop, and to which roles, if any, such requirements should continue to apply.
- Staff are no longer required to wear face masks.
- UCA Op Shops, as church workplaces, are required to complete a Covid-Safe plan. It is now recommended to use the state government's simplified CovidSafe plan template available from www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/covidsafe-plan.
- Failure to comply with all current COVID restrictions and requirements, including those above, may incur substantial fines if compliance audited by Health officials.
- Good hygiene should continue to be practiced, including regularly washing hands, using hand sanitiser whenever handling donated goods or cash.

VOLUNTEERS:

Where possible you should keep at least 1.5 metres between yourself and others at all times and practice good hygiene. If you are in a high-risk group, you can volunteer, however, consider minimising the number of different people you interact with. High-risk groups include people aged 70 years and over, people aged 65 years and over with chronic medical conditions, people with compromised immune systems and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over the age of 50.

As of 25/06/2022

FIRST AID PRECAUTIONS

In the event of someone needing first aid treatment, are there any additional precautions required?

Anyone administering first aid should use general droplet and contact precautions, namely a face mask for the person they are treating which they should encourage the person to apply themselves, a face mask and gloves for the first aider, and goggles for the first aider (if available).

In the event that a first aider has a reason to suspect a person is infected with COVID-19, they should try to limit their contact with that person as much as they can, meaning they should avoid physical contact (e.g. checking pulses and performing physical assessments) unless absolutely necessary, such as performing CPR or putting people in a recovery position if they are unconscious and/or struggling to breathe.

As of 11/06/2020

