

Wastewater testing for COVID-19

Information for residents in public housing

OFFICIAL

The Victorian Government uses wastewater testing to help find people who have COVID-19 living in the community. These could be people who do not have symptoms and do not know they have COVID-19.

If COVID-19 is found in wastewater from your building or estate, we will let you know and ask you to get tested. Testing helps us know where the virus is spreading so we can keep families and communities safe. Getting tested allows you to protect yourself, your loved ones and your community.

Wastewater

Wastewater is water that has been used and carried away from your house. It is the water and waste that goes down a drain or toilet.

It is separate from the clean water supply that comes into your house.

Your water remains completely safe to drink and for all household uses even if there are COVID-19 cases in your area or there is wastewater found in a building you live or work in.

'Shedding' COVID-19

People who have COVID-19, or who have recently recovered from COVID-19, shed the virus. This means they drop small traces of the virus into the wastewater system when they use the toilet or bathroom. This includes when they take a shower, brush teeth, wash hands or flush tissues down the toilet.

There will not always be new COVID-19 cases in places where wastewater testing has found traces of the virus. People who have recently recovered from COVID-19 can still shed the virus for many weeks after they have recovered.

Someone who has recovered from COVID-19 and is still shedding the virus does not pass the virus onto other people.

COVID-19 vaccines will not make you shed the virus.

Testing wastewater

The government regularly tests wastewater across Victoria to look for any traces of COVID-19 in the community that we do not know about.

Sometimes wastewater testing will find traces of the virus in the wastewater from an area where there are not any confirmed cases of COVID-19. When this happens, we will ask people living in that area to get tested for COVID-19. You should get tested even if you don't have symptoms.

Wastewater testing does not show which specific house or apartments the traces of COVID-19 came from in an area. This is why sometimes everybody living in an apartment building or tower will be asked to get tested at the same time.

Symptoms of COVID-19

Symptoms of COVID-19 include chills or sweats, a cough, fever, sore throat, shortness of breath, runny nose or loss or change in sense of smell or taste. Some people may also experience headache, muscle soreness, stuffy nose, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea.

If you have any of these symptoms, however mild, you should seek advice and get tested. To get further advice, call the 24-hour Coronavirus Hotline 1800 675 398 or your doctor. You can find your nearest COVID-19 testing site at coronavirus.vic.gov.au/where-get-tested-covid-19

Vaccination

Vaccines are free, safe and voluntary. Getting vaccinated helps protect you from getting sick from COVID-19. The vaccines being used in Australia are very effective at preventing serious illness and loss of life from COVID-19.

Everyone aged 16 years or older who lives in public housing is eligible for the Pfizer vaccine. For information about how to book your COVID-19 vaccine appointment, speak with your onsite health concierge or visit Book your vaccine appointment coronavirus.vic.gov.au/book-your-vaccine-appointment

Where can I find more information?

Speak with your onsite health concierge (where available), or on-site staff.

Call the dedicated Coronavirus Hotline on **1800 675 398** for more information.

If you need to speak to someone in another language, press zero (0) when connected.

To find out more information about coronavirus and how to stay safe visit coronavirus.vic.gov.au

To receive this document in another format please email the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing <RREngagement&partnerships@dffh.vic.gov.au>

Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.

© State of Victoria, Australia, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, August 2021.

Except where otherwise indicated, the images in this publication show models and illustrative settings only, and do not necessarily depict actual services, facilities or recipients of services.

This publication may contain images of deceased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.