

COVID-19: Public health advice for people in NSW who have travelled to or from the greater Melbourne metropolitan area in the last 14 days

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Summary

This document provides a summary of the current Public Health Order relating to Melbourne Hotspots and updated public advice. There are concerns about transmission outside of the hot spots. People who have travelled to any part of Melbourne must not visit sensitive settings including aged care facilities and hospitals. Detailed advice on management of high risk settings is provided.

This advice and future updates are available online on the NSW Health website at <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/interstate-travel.aspx>

Public Health Order – Melbourne hot spots

The location of current COVID-19 community outbreaks in Melbourne (hotspots) can be found at: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/new-restrictions-melbournes-hot-zones-covid-19>.

A person who has been in a hotspot location within the last 14 days **must not travel to NSW** unless

- they are a NSW resident
- they are entering NSW to obtaining medical or other care, to fulfil a legal obligation or give effect to a Court order, or to provide an essential service.

If a person has been in a hotspot location within the last 14 days is already in NSW or arrives in NSW, they **must self-isolate for 14 days** from the time they were last in a COVID hotspot location.

The person must comply with the NSW Health **self-isolation guidelines**. They cannot go to work, unless providing an essential service and should check whether their employer has additional requirements around work attendance. They cannot go to school, childcare, recreation facilities, public areas, sightseeing or go shopping.

There are only limited reasons a person in self-isolation can leave their home, including obtaining medical care, complying with legal obligations, providing an essential service, in an emergency or to leave NSW.

See: [Public Health \(COVID-19 Interstate Hotspots\) Order 2020](#) and isolation guidelines for [People who have visited or travelled from Melbourne hotspots](#).

Exercise caution for people who have been in greater Melbourne for high risk settings

Because transmission may also be occurring in other parts of the *greater Melbourne metropolitan area*, (see a map at: <https://liveinmelbourne.vic.gov.au/discover/melbourne-victoria/metropolitan-melbourne>) a cautious approach is applied to restrict people who have been in or transited through

the greater Melbourne metropolitan area from visiting high-risk settings until 14 days after leaving the area. **People who have travelled to any part of Melbourne must not visit sensitive settings including aged care facilities and hospitals.**

NSW Health staff, along with the wider community, are **strongly discouraged from travelling to Melbourne** during the course of this outbreak.

Advice for staff of health facilities who have returned from greater Melbourne

All persons entering a health facility will be:

- assessed for symptoms and fever and asked to be tested and self-isolate if symptomatic
- asked if they have travelled from greater Melbourne metropolitan area in the last 14 days

If they have travelled from greater Melbourne metropolitan area in the last 14 days then:

- advise them that should even the mildest of symptoms arise, they must self-isolate and be tested for COVID-19
- ask if they have been in a hotspot. If they have been in a hotspot then they should self isolate and be excluded from work, except in exceptional circumstances
- exceptional circumstances include where the absence of the staff member will significantly compromise clinical care. In this case, assess the risk of COVID infection against the consequence of impacting patient care, and whether the risk can be adequately mitigated.

Consider:

- the location and duration of contact in COVID-19 community outbreaks areas in Melbourne, and nature of the transmission risk involved (e.g. number of social contacts, level of contact with potentially affected communities);
- the type of clinical duties undertaken, and whether other mitigation strategies such as physical distancing, hand hygiene and use of PPE will be possible at all times.

Advice for visitors to a hospital who have been in greater Melbourne

Visitor screening

Ensure screening stations in all NSW Health facilities and services asking people “Have you travelled to greater Melbourne metropolitan area (including transiting in Melbourne) in the last 14 days?”

If the answer is yes:

- Exclude the visitor for a period of 14 days, from the date they left Melbourne
- Advise that they must self isolate for 14 days if they have been in a hotspot
- Assess them for symptoms and fever. Any person with symptoms or fever should have a test for COVID-19 and self-isolate.

Note, each facility will have an escalation path to their executive to manage exceptions in the case of specific circumstances, for example, where the person is visiting a dying relative.

Advice for patients who have been in greater Melbourne

Patient assessment

Any patient who presents to an Emergency Department should be asked at registration whether they have travelled from greater Melbourne metropolitan area (including transiting in Melbourne) during the past 14 days. If so:

- the patient is to wear a mask while waiting
- at triage, determine if the patient has any COVID-19 symptoms or fever. If so, the patient should be managed with [contact and droplet precautions](#) while in the department.
- If any patient requires hospitalisation, the patient should be handled with contact and droplet precautions at least until their COVID-19 status is established.

Patients who are discharged from the emergency department who have been in a hotspot location within the last 14 days should be advised to travel directly home while wearing a mask, to self-isolate for 14 days after they were last in a hotspot location, and to monitor themselves carefully for symptoms.

Current in patients should be asked if they have travelled from greater Melbourne metropolitan area (including transiting in Melbourne) during the past 14 days. If so, they should be handled with contact and droplet precautions at least until their COVID-19 status is established.

Advice for elective surgery

For planned elective surgery, staff will ask patients at time of booking confirmation if they have travelled to greater Melbourne metropolitan area (including transiting in Melbourne) in the past 14 days.

If the answer is yes, further assessment should consider:

- how urgent is the elective procedure?
- what are the risks of the procedure being postponed until 14 days after their return?
- is the person well
- whether they have been in a hot spot area?

If the person has been in a hotspot location the elective surgery should be deferred until 14 days after the person was last in a hotspot area, and the person should be instructed to self-isolate for that time and to monitor themselves carefully for symptoms. If the person has only been in other parts of Melbourne (not a hotspot) and is scheduled for a **non-urgent procedure**, delay the surgery if there is minimal clinical risk from deferral and reschedule as soon as possible after 14 days after leaving Melbourne.

If the procedure is **urgent**, patients should be managed with contact and droplet precautions.

Advice for staff and visitors to aged care facilities

Staff and visitors who have been in or transited through the greater Melbourne metropolitan area should not attend aged care facilities or other settings with vulnerable people.

Advice for staff providing community/home based aged care, disability and other support services

Staff who provide home based services who have returned from greater Melbourne metropolitan area (including transiting in Melbourne) should exclude themselves from providing in-home community-based care.

If the person has been in a hotspot within the last 14 days, the person should be instructed to self-isolate for 14 days since they were last in the hotspot, and to monitor themselves carefully for symptoms.

If symptoms develop, they should seek COVID-19 testing and self-isolate until test result is available. For staff who have not been in a hotspot, where the manager of the service determines that it is essential for the staff member to continue in their role, staff can continue to provide services in these settings, provided they adopt standard precautions, including physical distancing as much as feasible, good hand hygiene, self-monitoring for symptoms and that they exclude themselves immediately should even mild symptoms occur.

Advice for students returning to and from boarding schools

Staff and students should not be in a boarding school if they have been in the greater Melbourne metropolitan area (including transiting in Melbourne) in the last 14 days.

If the person has been in a hotspot within the last 14 days, the person should be instructed to self-isolate for 14 days since they were last in the hotspot, and to monitor themselves carefully for symptoms.