

# Contact risk assessment for community and workplace settings

**Updated: 28 September 2021**

**Note:** This document reflects the latest NSW Health operational guidance for Public Health Units. It will continue to be updated regularly, informed by experience, feedback and emerging evidence.

## Scope

This guidance on contact risk assessment is for use in community and workplace settings including, but not limited to, offices, hospitality venues, retail premises, TAFE/universities, supermarkets, warehouses and construction sites. It builds on [CDNA National Guidelines for Public Health Units](#). The guidance should be used by NSW Health staff, businesses and members of the public to guide assessment and management of situations where an infectious case has attended a community or workplace setting.

The guidance is **not** for household or household-like contacts, contacts in schools, or contacts in healthcare, residential facilities including aged care, correctional centres or other settings where cases and contacts interact frequently with people at high risk of severe illness.

The COVID-19 situation is evolving rapidly in NSW and this guidance will be updated from time-to-time. The risk categories for close-range contacts in indoor and outdoor settings are currently under review.

## Specific assessment may be required in some circumstances

This guidance is general. Specific risk assessment by NSW Health may be required in some circumstances, including:

- Settings where transmission has occurred
- Settings where people are in close proximity for extended periods of time, including food processing facilities and production lines
- Settings with poor ventilation
- Settings where people are more likely to generate aerosols, including those where people talk loudly, sing or shout, or are engaged in physical work which increases their respiratory rate.

In these circumstances, contacts (including those who are fully vaccinated), may be assessed as higher risk than they would be under the general guidance, and it is recommended that businesses seek advice from NSW Health.

## The infectious period

A case's infectious period should be assumed to be from 48 hours before onset of symptoms until medical clearance. If a case is asymptomatic, they should generally be assumed infectious from 48 hours before the initial positive test.

## Contact risk assessment

The risk of COVID-19 transmission is increased when a person:

- Has close-range (<1.5m) contact with a case during the case's infectious period; or
- Shares an indoor space with a case during the case's infectious period.

Risk categories for each type of contact are described in **Table 1** and **Table 2**.

**Table 1:** Risk categories for people who have had close-range (<1.5m) contact with a case during the case's infectious period, for both **indoor and outdoor** settings.

Type of close-range contact	Masks*	Vaccination status of the exposed person**	
		Partial or none	Full
Direct physical contact†	Yes	Close	Casual
	No	Close	Casual
Conversation while within 1.5 m	Yes	Close	Low risk
	No	Close	Casual
Within 1.5m for more than 1 minute (cumulative over 24hrs)	Yes	Close	Low risk
	No	Close	Casual

\* No = Mask not worn or improperly worn by case or contact.

\*\* Fully vaccinated is 14 days following 2nd dose.

† Includes shaking hands, hugging or kissing.

**Table 2:** Risk categories for people who have shared an indoor space with a case during their infectious period but who have not had close-range (<1.5m) contact.

Size of indoor space* (m2)	Time (mins)	Masks**	Vaccination status of the exposed person†	
			Partial or none	Full
< 100	< 1	Yes	Low risk	Low risk
		No	Casual	Low risk
	1 to 15	Yes or no	Close	Low risk
	> 15	Yes or no	Close	Casual
100 - 300	< 1	Yes or no	Low risk	Low risk
	1 to 15	Yes or no	Casual	Low risk
	> 15	Yes or no	Casual	Low risk
> 300	Any	Yes or no	Low risk	Low risk

\* An indoor space is any substantially enclosed area where airflow is impeded by a wall, partition or barrier.

\*\* No = Mask not worn or improperly worn by case or contact.

† Fully vaccinated is 14 days following 2nd dose.

## Contact management

### Close contacts

Should follow the advice for close contacts:

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/advice-for-contacts.aspx>

### Casual contacts

Should follow the advice for casual contacts:

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/covid-19-casual-contact.aspx>

Casual contacts who have a rapid antigen test (RAT) each day until 14 days have passed since their last exposure to an infectious case are not required to have PCR tests or self-isolate.

Casual contacts should not enter healthcare and residential aged care settings until more than 14 days have passed since exposure, unless essential.

### Low risk contacts

Should monitor for symptoms and get a PCR test and self-isolate if symptoms develop.