



Our response to COVID-19

Information current as at 22 March 2020

Coronavirus (COVID-19) information for our guest, families, carer, and others who utilise I Am Here services.

What we're doing

I AM HERE is monitoring the Coronavirus situation diligently and following official advice from the World Health Organisation, Australian Government and state health authorities.

We are continually reviewing and implementing our plans to keep everyone safe at I AM HERE – our staff, guests, families and carers, contractors and suppliers and all others who utilise our services and visit our sites.

We have a **COVID-19 Response Team** managing our organisational response to the pandemic.

The team is continually developing and updating guidelines for us to follow.

The safeguards we are implementing all meet official Australian Government COVID-19 guidelines.

Staff

All I AM HERE staff are responsible for ensuring they keep guests, visitors and themselves safe by adhering to our hygiene policies.

These include

- Washing hands properly and regularly
- Practicing 1.5m social distancing where practical
- Following cough etiquette.

Visitors are required to follow these protocols too.

We're providing ongoing information to our staff, to our customers and their families, and visitors to our sites.

In addition to our strict infection control guidelines, our staff are also required to adhere the following protocols:

- Any staff with a confirmed case of COVID-19 must self-quarantine for 14 days or longer until they are symptom-free and have medical clearance from their GP.
- Staff must notify their manager and our HR team if they have been in contact for any period of time with anyone who;



- Has been confirmed with COVID-19 or
- Is currently being tested for COVID-19.

Following assessment by management and the COVID-19 Response Team, the staff member may be required to self-isolate.

Meetings

- Where practical, all meetings are to take place via phone or Skype.
- If it is absolutely critical to meet in person, strict social distancing measures will be in place along with infection control practices.
- Formal face-to-face training has ceased. Ongoing coaching and on-the-job training by experienced staff and managers (where already working together on site) will ensure consistent and safe services whilst following diligent infection control processes.
- All staff that can work from home are now permitted to do so.

Supplies

We are endeavouring to maintain appropriate levels of supplies. This includes medications and items for safe food handling, infection control, and cleaning.

We are also in constant contact with a variety of suppliers and the government on how best to maintain continuity of supply.

How we are protecting our guests, staff and visitors

We are committed to ensuring the safety of all guests, staff and others who visit our services and sites. We have been monitoring the COVID-19 situation closely and will continue to do so.

Right now, the most important things we can all do are:

- Wash our hands properly and regularly
- Avoid touching your face, nose, mouth and eyes
- Be diligent about social distancing – at least 1.5m apart from others.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow or a tissue.
- Go to the doctor if we feel unwell. Please do not visit our sites if you are feeling unwell.
- Only trust reliable sources of information about the virus.

We recommend the [World Health Organisation](#), or the [Australian Department of Health](#).

Keeping guests calm and informed

Our support workers have easy-to-understand information for guests and their carers.

This includes information on self-care, activities and exercise.



We'll continue to provide our staff with resources and updated information to help our guests and carers understand the current situation and what they should do.

About Coronavirus

[Find out the facts about Coronavirus](#)

Source: Australian Department of Health

- Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness caused by a new virus. Symptoms range from a mild cough to pneumonia.
- Some people recover easily, others may get very sick very quickly. There is evidence that it spreads from person to person.

[What are the symptoms of Coronavirus?](#)

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are:

- Fever
- Dry cough

Some people who are ill may have:

- Tiredness
- Aches and pains
- Headaches
- Nasal congestion or runny nose
- Sore throat
- Shortness of breath
- Diarrhoea (this is rare)

These symptoms are usually mild and begin gradually. Some people become infected but don't develop any symptoms and don't feel unwell.

Most people (about 80%) recover from the disease without needing special treatment. However, isolation and other social distancing requirements may need to be implemented.

Around 1 out of every 6 people who get COVID-19 becomes seriously ill and develop difficulty breathing.



Should I worry about COVID-19?

Illness due to COVID-19 infection is generally mild, especially for children and young adults. However, it can cause serious illness: about 1 in every 5 people who catch it need hospital care.

It is therefore quite normal for people to worry about how the COVID-19 outbreak will affect them and their loved ones.

We can channel our concerns into actions to protect ourselves, our loved ones and our communities.

First and foremost among these actions, is regular and thorough hand-washing and good respiratory hygiene. Secondly, keep informed and follow the advice of the local health authorities including any restrictions put in place on travel, movement and gatherings.

The World Health Organisation has produced a video which explains the virus, where it came from, what it does, how it's transmitted, what the symptoms are, and how we can prevent infection. [This information sheet from the Australian Department of Health also has useful information.](#)

Helpful links about Coronavirus

World Health Organisation

The [World Health Organisation](#) has a number of resources that we're consulting, including videos on what you can do.

They also have a [great myth buster page](#), to help you sort fact from fiction.

Australian Department of Health

The [Australian Department of Health](#) is closely monitoring the virus and developing advice based on the Australian situation.

Smart Traveller

The Australian Government is providing advice through [Smart Traveller](#) for those who are travelling to, or returning from, overseas.



FAQs

HOW ARE YOU KEEPING YOUR GUESTS SAFE?

Our COVID-19 Response Team is closely monitoring the situation on an hour-by-hour basis and responding accordingly.

As well as our usual strict hygiene and disease control policies, we have put a range of COVID-19 specific procedures in place.

We are also following the [Australian Health Department's](#) advice closely.

CAN I STILL VISIT MY FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND AT I AM HERE?

Visitors to our facilities will be limited to two people for 30 mins each visit and limited to one visit per week.

When visitors come to our house they MUST remain in the guest's room or in the outside open areas away from everyone. Staff will encourage hand sanitizing and provide a mask as well as ensure your own masks and hand sanitizing is done when in contact with the visitors.

Please call ahead if you are planning on visiting and remember to follow the instructions of our staff when (and if) you are onsite.

DO GUESTS OR VISITORS NEED TO WEAR A MASK?

The World Health Organisation advises that wearing a mask is only helpful if the person with the illness wears the mask themselves. At this stage we do not require healthy customers or visitors to wear masks.

We are watching the advice from health authorities. If their recommendations change, we will update our procedures accordingly. We will also update the information on our website.

WHAT HAPPENS IF MY SUPPORT WORKER GETS SICK AND NEEDS TO SELF ISOLATE?

Our priority is making sure our customers receive the support they need. We are training more of our staff and, if needed, will allocate them to other services as needed.

WILL I AM HERE HAVE ENOUGH SUPPLIES OF ESSENTIAL ITEMS?

We have plans in place to maintain essential supplies.

At this stage, we expect the companies we usually purchase from will hold enough stock for our needs.

If there is any change to this information we will update everyone concerned.



WHAT PRECAUTIONS ARE I AM HERE FRONTLINE AND OFFICE STAFF TAKING?

Even under normal circumstances, every I AM HERE staff member takes hygiene very seriously as part of our usual operating procedures.

The COVID-19 crisis has acted as a sharp reminder to be even more diligent about our hygiene and food safety practices.

We're closely watching what advice issued by the Australian Government and Health Authorities.

We will continue to operate in strict accordance with the current rules and respond as quickly as possible to any updated directives.

I STILL HAVE A QUESTION. WHO DO I CONTACT?

I AM HERE is committed to the safety and wellbeing of our guests, their carers and our staff.

If you still have a question about I AM HERE's response to COVID-19, don't hesitate to contact us via email enquiries@iamhere.org.au or by phone (02) 4965 8111