



Apartment Living & COVID-19 Best Practice Guideline

RESIDENTS

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease spread between people.

Apartment buildings and other shared living spaces pose the potential risk of an infected resident spreading the virus to other residents. This is also known as community spread.

Whether you're a landlord, owner occupier, committee or a building owner, here's what you need to know about preparedness, communication and resident safety during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Apartment Living and COVID-19 for Residents

Introduction

Canberrans are being asked to stay at home to assist in our response to positive cases of COVID-19 in the ACT.

The lockdown restrictions came into effect from 5:00pm Thursday 12 August 2021 and are scheduled to continue until 5:00pm Thursday 2 September 2021 at the earliest.

These restrictions are to help slow the spread of the virus and allow contact tracers to do their work.

The restrictions will also ensure that we don't put additional pressure on our health services.

The six essential reasons you can leave your home during this lockdown are:

- to buy essential groceries and medicine
- to access essential healthcare including in-home care
- for essential work
- to exercise outdoors for one hour per day in your region
- to get a COVID-19 test
- to get a COVID-19 vaccination

You can view more details on the reasons you can leave home below.

Essential retail will remain open for the duration of the lockdown. We encourage all Canberrans to buy only what they need, maintain social distancing and be considerate.

Anyone aged 12 years and over must wear a mask at all times upon leaving home. For some people this is not possible. For full details on [face masks and exemptions](#) here.

Social Distancing

During the lockdown period, we ask all Canberrans to stay at home and leave only for essential reasons detailed below.

This is because some people who have COVID-19 may be infectious before they develop symptoms, and a small number of people with COVID-19 may not show any symptoms at all.

This means that people with COVID-19 may be able to spread the disease to others, without knowing they are unwell.

This means that the Committee will need to close any and all shared facilities such as pools, gyms, BBQ, roof tops and any other community spaces. Please obey any signs indicating an area has been closed off.

Please avoid lingering in shared spaces such as hallways and stairwells. Please be mindful of other residents when using lifts and adhere to COVID-19 capacity limits in lifts.

Find information on social distancing here:

<https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/stay-safe-and-healthy/protect-yourself#Physical-social-distancing>

Face Masks

Wearing of face masks is mandatory in the ACT from 5:00pm Thursday 12 August 2021.

Unless lawfully exempted, if you are aged 12 years and over, you must wear a mask at all times when leaving home, including in workplaces.

SCA recommend wearing a face mask in all communal areas within your building.

Self-Isolation or Quarantine

In the ACT, self-isolation is mandatory for people with confirmed COVID-19.

If you have been tested for COVID-19, you also must [isolate until you get a negative test result](#), and/or until your symptoms have resolved.

Information about what to do while in isolation is located here:

<https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/stay-safe-and-healthy/symptoms-and-getting-tested/what-to-do-when-waiting-for-results>

What does it mean to isolate at home?

Being isolated at home means that you must stay at home.

You cannot leave home to go to work, school, or public areas, such as shops, cafes, or restaurants.

You cannot travel on public transport, or in a taxi or rideshare.

You must not have visitors at your home.

You must remain isolated at home until you receive a negative test result and when ACT Health tells you it is safe to come out of isolation.

When isolating, do not enter any communal areas such as pools, pools, gyms, BBQ, roof tops and any other shared spaces. You must stay within the confines of your apartment.

If you are waiting for a COVID-19 test result, find out more details here:

<https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/stay-safe-and-healthy/symptoms-and-getting-tested/what-to-do-when-waiting-for-results>

Are residents required to disclose to the Strata Community if they are self-quarantined or infected?

At this stage, it is unknown if the Health Department intends to notify a Strata Community if it has issued a notice to a person to quarantine.

However, SCA recommends all residents, and their visitors, undertake best practice to provide a duty, not cause a hazard or interfere with quiet enjoyment on and of common property. The Strata Community has an obligation to maintain common property.

Recommendation 1:

Health, safety and security of lot owners, occupiers of lots and others

- » A lot owner or occupier must not use the lot, or permit it to be used, to cause a hazard to the health, safety and security of an owner, occupier, or user of another lot.

Recommendation 2:

Behaviour of owners, occupiers, and invitees on common property

- » An owner or occupier of a lot must take all reasonable steps to ensure that guests of the owner or occupier do not behave in a manner likely to unreasonably interfere with the peaceful enjoyment of any other person entitled to use the common property.

Should I disclose to the Strata Community that I am self-isolating and/or have been ordered to self-isolate?

Yes, however you should only share information that is reasonably necessary for preventing or managing COVID-19. That includes information that the [Department of Health](#) says is needed to identify risk and implement appropriate controls to prevent or manage COVID-19, for example:

- whether the individual or a close contact has been exposed to a known case of COVID-19
- whether the individual has recently travelled overseas and to which countries.

Should I disclose to the Strata Community that I have been infected with COVID-19?

Yes, you should disclose to your strata community manager if you have been diagnosed with COVID-19.

Your identity and specific location will be kept confidential, but it does allow the Committee to notify any of the service contractors who may be impacted by your circumstance and give them opportunity to manage their own Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) as required. For example, they may be the waste management providers removing your rubbish for you, or the Building Manager delivering your mail.

In addition, there are duties under the Workplace Health & Safety Act for which a Strata Community is responsible with respect to the common property and contractors that service the building. As all lot owners share the common property as tenants in common, those duties for disclosure will extend to you as an owner or landlord.

What type of Policies may the Committee create?

The Committee are responsible for the management of the common areas and facilities and may need to create additional policies to manage the COVID-19 crisis.

These new policies may include:

1. **Delivery of parcels to your unit** – you should instruct the courier to meet you outside or in the lobby area and not come up to your apartment. If you are unable to leave your apartment, arrangements will need to be made with the committee for others to assist.
2. **Visitors and visitors parking** – to manage the risk of exposure to other residents, the committee may recommend restriction on the number of social visitors in line with government protocols, but certainly, the visitor's carparks will be restricted for use by essential services such as doctors and medical services as a priority, etc.
3. **Rubbish/waste** – you may be asked not to use the chute or rubbish room and to double bag the rubbish from your bin. Alternate collection methods may need to be implemented while you are housebound.
4. **Mail** – the committee may require you to make alternate arrangements for the delivery of mail.
5. **Shared facilities** – the committee may determine new access times (hours of operation and closure) of shared community facilities. Facilities such as pools and gyms must be shut completely.
6. **Shared laundry facilities** – restricted use and/or closure of facilities may extend to communal laundries if residents do not adhere to the Government guidelines. Residents should be encouraged to take protective measures such as wearing masks, wearing gloves, washing their hands, not touching their face, and disinfecting all surfaces of the machines they use. Maintain social distancing. Recommend use of the hot water setting and use of laundry detergents that contain a bleach compound. (Include advice to consider the material being washed so that clothing items aren't damaged).
7. **Meeting & Communication** – the committee may implement new meeting and communication protocols to minimise the potential spread of the virus and enable decisions of the Strata Community to continue to be made by an alternate means; e.g., *teleconference, on-line meetings, ballots*.

8. **Building Maintenance & Services** – the committee may determine to increase or reduce services to the building to minimise risks to residents; e.g., *increase cleaning regime, increase waste collection if all residents are staying home and the rubbish generated increases, employ security guards if there is a power failure and the entry/exit security systems stops working or garage doors etc.*

What if I have pets?

Although our pets aren't getting sick, COVID-19 is changing the lives of pets especially for dogs living in apartments.

Under quarantine or in self-isolation, pets in apartments are going to need to do their business inside; if you use your balcony or shower for this, please "scoop the poop" and not wash it down the drain system. After toileting, disinfect the affected area.

Make sure you keep up all flea treatments as well. You don't need a flea outbreak at this time within the building.

When you become anxious, or things change, you might see an uptick in depressive behaviour like trouble sleeping, loss of appetite, not wanting to play or seeming listless. Other pets might also become more destructive and anxious, exhibiting behaviour such as increased reactivity, increased barking or noise, or difficulty settling. Try to set up a routine within your apartment and stick to it.

There is currently no evidence of humans contracting COVID-19 from pets. There is also no evidence that companion animals play a role in the spread of the virus.

For some other great tips for caring for your pets during COVID-19 visit [RSPCA Australia](https://www.rspca.org.au).

This publication is only a guide. Readers should make and rely on their own expert enquiries. No warranty is given about the accuracy of the material and no liability for negligence or otherwise is assumed by SCA, its servants or agents in any way connected with this publication.

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Please visit www.covid19.act.gov.au/ for regular updates.

Government Information – Useful Links

COVID-19 Government Updates

Website

<https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/>

Face Mask Requirements

<https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/act-status-and-response/face-masks>

COVID-19 exposure locations in the ACT

<https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/act-status-and-response/act-covid-19-exposure-locations>

Quarantine

<https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/stay-safe-and-healthy/quarantine-and-isolation/quarantine>

Lockdown Requirements

<https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/act-status-and-response/lockdown#Stay-at-home>

Vaccines

[COVID-19 vaccine - COVID-19 \(act.gov.au\)](#)

Privacy

<https://www.oaic.gov.au/updates/covid-19-advice-and-guidance/>

Mental Health and Wellbeing

<https://www.health.act.gov.au/services-and-programs/mental-health/mental-health-and-wellbeing-during-covid-19>

How to protect yourself

<https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/stay-safe-and-healthy/protect-yourself>

Access Help – Payments

<https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/community/access-help>

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/covid-19-disaster-payment-australian-capital-territory>

Tenants

<https://justice.act.gov.au/renting-and-occupancy-laws/information-tenants-and-occupants-impacted-covid-19>



**Have a question?
Looking for advice**

COVID-19 helpline

► Call **(02) 6207 7244**
from 8am-8pm daily.

Access Canberra Business Liaison Line

► Call **(02) 6205 0900** to discuss your
business needs.

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25 August 2021