

# Public Health Response Process

## The Public Health response process

### Public Messaging

- It's important for the public to know as quickly as possible when someone infected with COVID-19 has visited a venue.
- This enables the public to assess their own risk and take action, which may include being tested and isolating until a negative result, or identifying themselves through the Qld Health online portal as a potential close contact
- Exposure venues are listed on the Queensland Health website as soon as they have been identified because it's important to help slow or stop spread of the virus that individuals can take action asap. Getting information to the general public quickly has been a critical factor in Queensland's success to date.
- This means that we might publish a venue before we have been able to contact the venue.
- Depending on the situation, Queensland Health Public Health Units may not contact every venue. Venues that are close contact venues will be prioritised as these are higher risk locations.

### Close Contacts

- Finding people who may have had a close contact exposure to an infected person is an important immediate public health priority when an infected person has been notified. Time is of the essence to prevent further community transmission.
- Public Health Units undertake direct contact tracing of individuals who can be named as a potential close contact by the infected person, or identified rapidly through various databases
- Gaps or delays in identifying these individuals can be addressed by making known to the public any venues the infected person has visited and asking the public to provide details through the website if they have been to an identified venue.
- Close contacts who identify themselves through the Queensland Health website will be contacted by the Public Health Unit. Their potential exposure will be risk-assessed and they will be provided advice as to what action they need to take in relation to quarantine and testing.
- Individuals, including staff of a close contact venue will need to follow the instructions on the Queensland Health website, unless instructed otherwise by the Public Health Unit.

- Individuals who have completed the form on the Queensland Health website will be contacted. They should continue to follow the advice on the website until contacted.

### **Close Contact businesses**

- The local Public Health Unit will make contact with businesses as soon as possible after identifying the business is a site of potential COVID-19 transmission. The Public Health Unit will gather further information from the business and advise if there is a specific action which needs to be taken. This may be one business within a shopping centre or the entire shopping centre.
- In assessing the risk of transmission, the Public Health Unit takes into consideration a range of factors including the length of time the infected person was in the premise; what activities they did there; the physical characteristics of the premise; and whether the infected person had face to face contact with other people.
- People who are identified as 'close contacts' will require quarantine and testing, in accordance with national guidelines.
- The Public Health Unit will provide advice on cleaning. Some businesses will need to close for cleaning, but once that cleaning is complete, they will be able to re-open.
- If a business is open and trading it means it is safe to visit – that includes visiting and purchasing any of their goods or services.

### **Casual Contacts**

- If you have self-identified through the Queensland Health portal, please follow the instructions on the Queensland Health website until contacted with further instructions.
- As the public health response evolves, the advice for casual contacts may change.

### **Casual Contact Venues**

- The Public Health Units will try to make contact with casual contact venues, however this varies based on the workload at the time.
- Businesses identified as casual contact exposures should continue to implement usual COVID prevention measures as per their COVID plan.

## **Questions & Answers**

### **Is it only close contact venues which are asked to close, deep clean?**

Close contact venues may be asked to close temporarily, and the business asked to organise cleaning either of a specific area or the entire venue. An individual risk assessment is done at a local level and depending on circumstances the advice might vary. What is for certain, is that the Public Health Unit will be in contact if they are worried. All businesses should continue operations until they are told otherwise. As it takes the Public Health Unit time to work through the cases movements and as history unfolds it could be later in the incident response that a venue is contacted and asked to take some action.

## **Do casual contact venues ever receive a call from the Public Health Unit or is it only close contact venues?**

The Public Health Units will try to make contact with casual contact venues, however this varies based on the workload at the time. The Public Health Unit focuses on the case and quarantine of close contacts and the close contact venues as immediate priority. Best efforts are made to contact casual contact venues but it doesn't always happen and the timeframe which a venue may receive contact will vary. Businesses do not need to close unless directed to do so by the Public Health Unit.

## **For businesses which are asked to close, when can they recommence trading?**

As soon as any cleaning is completed, the business is able to open without any further confirmation from Queensland Health. A business may choose to delay reopening for other reasons, for example, staff are in quarantine so the business cannot operate.

## **What should shopping centre managers do if they have staff who have worked in the shopping centre at the time the positive case visited?**

If staff of the shopping centre were in the exposure venue at the date and time of concern, they should immediately quarantine and get tested. Both identified close and casual contacts will be contacted by Queensland Health with further instructions.

## **If a food court is listed as a close contact venue, what do they need to do?**

The Public Health Unit will make contact with shopping centre management to provide specific advice in relation to cleaning.

## **Actions**

- Visit the Queensland Health website <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19/current-status/contact-tracing> regularly for contact tracing alerts and call to action information.
- Await further instructions from Queensland Health where indicated
- Call 134 COVID if you require any assistance.

**We thank you for your support in responding quickly in the event one of our public health units contacts you.**