

COVID-19: Public health orders – what do I need to know?

FACTSHEET

This factsheet is part of a series from Legal Aid NSW about COVID-19 and everyday law.

You may be worried or confused about how COVID-19 will affect you and your everyday life. Sometimes a crisis can make legal problems worse or new problems might develop. Legal Aid NSW understands that there will be a lot of questions about money worries, fines, police, housing, Centrelink, employment, guardianship and mental health. This series of factsheets will give you helpful information and contacts to assist you to manage all the changes that are happening in our community.

What are the new public health order fines?

The NSW Government has issued public health orders to limit the spread of COVID-19. The orders have been issued under the Public Health Act.

The police have powers to give fines to people who don't follow the new orders.

For individuals

The police can:

- Give you an on-the-spot fine for \$1,000 if you don't follow the orders
- Fine you another \$5,500 for each day that you don't follow the orders
- Give you an on-the-spot fine for \$200 if you don't follow orders about the mandatory wearing of a face mask (see below) in certain premises in Greater Sydney, NSW airports and domestic flights into and out of NSW.

The court can:

- Fine you up to \$11,000 or give you 6 months imprisonment or both.

How can I follow the orders?

This is what you need to know to follow the public health orders:

- Movement and gatherings
- Face masks
- COVID-19 hotspots in NSW
- Self-isolation
- Providing your personal details when entering business premises
- International travel and mandatory quarantine
- Interstate travel

Movement and gatherings

To manage the spread of COVID-19, the NSW Government has issued rules about how we move around and gather in a COVID-19 safe way. These orders restrict the number of people allowed to travel, to visit a home and how many people can attend different events, ceremonies and venues.

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1. Stay-at-home orders for Greater Sydney region

From **6:00pm on 26 June 2021** until **11:59pm on Friday 30 July 2021**, if you usually live in, work or study within the **Greater Sydney region** you must stay at home unless you have a **reasonable excuse**.

- The '**Greater Sydney region**' includes **Greater Sydney, the Blue Mountains, Central Coast, Wollongong, and Shellharbour**.

To confirm the areas affected by the stay-at-home orders refer to [this map](#).

If you have been in the Greater Sydney region on or after Monday 21 June, you must continue to follow the stay at home rules for 14 days after you have left Greater Sydney.

If you usually live in, work in, or attend a university or tertiary institution in the Greater Sydney region you must also follow the stay at home rules, unless you have not been in Greater Sydney for the last 14 days.

Employers must allow employees to work from home if it is reasonably practicable to do so. If you work in a regional community but travel to Greater Sydney region, you should consider working from home.

This rule does not apply to a person who is homeless.

From **5:00pm on 9 July 2021**, the following additional restrictions will be in place as a response to the growing number of infectious cases in the community:

- Outdoor public gatherings limited to two people (excluding members of the same household)
- People must stay in their Local Government Area or within 10kms of home for exercise and outdoor recreation, with no carpooling between non-household members
- Browsing in shops is prohibited, plus only one person per household, per day may leave the home for shopping
- Funerals limited to ten people in total.

Restrictions are also in place for the rest of NSW and have been unaffected by the additional restrictions listed above. For further information, please see 'Other areas of NSW'.

Reasonable excuse

People in Greater Sydney region should only leave their home if they have a reasonable excuse to be away from their place of residence.

From **5:00pm on 9 July 2021**, the four main reasons to leave your home include:

- Shopping for food or other essential goods and services (one person only may leave their home each day)
- Medical care or compassionate needs (only one visitor can enter another residence to fulfil carers' responsibilities or provide care or assistance, or for compassionate reasons)
- Exercise with no more than 1 other person (unless members of the same household)
- Essential work, or education, where you cannot work or study from home.

You must carry proof of your address if you are

- exercising outdoors or have left your home for recreation, or

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- leaving the area of Greater Sydney including the Blue Mountains, Central Coast, Wollongong and Shellharbour.

You must show your proof of address if asked by the NSW Police.

Other reasons to leave your home include:

- Travelling to the person's place of residence, including between your different places of residence
- Accessing childcare
- Donating blood
- Accessing public services such as Centrelink, mental health services, employment services and domestic violence services
- Moving to a new home, or inspecting a new place
- Assisting a person to move places of residence
- Undertaking any legal obligations
- Avoiding injury, illness and harm or in an emergency
- Travelling to continue shared parenting arrangements
- Attending a funeral (maximum of ten people)
- Compassionate reasons, including where 2 people are in a relationship but do not live together
- Pastoral care if you are a priest, minister of religion or member of a religious order

Reasonable excuses for entering the area also includes returning to your home if you live or work in the Greater Sydney region.

If you are relying on a reasonable excuse to leave your home, you must return to your residence as soon as you have finished the purpose for which you left.

This also means people outside the Greater Sydney region should not enter Greater Sydney without a reasonable excuse. Entering Greater Sydney region to obtain food or services is allowed if it is not reasonably available outside the area. You are also allowed to travel through Greater Sydney in a vehicle if you do not leave your vehicle while in Greater Sydney (except for refuelling, an emergency or taking a rest stop).

You cannot take a holiday in Greater Sydney including the Blue Mountains, Central Coast, Wollongong and Shellharbour.

Businesses in the Greater Sydney region can remain open if they provide essential services.

Three-day testing for Fairfield LGA

From **Saturday, 17 July 2021**, residents of the Fairfield Local Government Area who need to leave their home for essential work must get a COVID test every three days. A list of testing locations close to Fairfield is available on the [NSW Government website](#).

Weekly testing for travelling into Greater Sydney

From **midnight, 13 July 2021**, people moving between Greater Sydney and regional NSW for essential work must also get a weekly COVID-19 test.

2. Activity restrictions for Greater Sydney, Central Coast, Blue Mountains, Wollongong and Shellharbour ('Greater Sydney region')

The following gathering activities are not permitted in the Greater Sydney region:

- Community sport, including training or a match
- Weddings from 11:59pm, Sunday 27 June 2021
- Drinking while standing at indoor venues
- Dancing at indoor hospitality venues or nightclubs including casinos, clubs, bars, pubs and food and drink premises
- Singing by audiences at indoor shows or by congregants at indoor places

The following premises in the Greater Sydney region are closed:

- Amusement centres, such as places to play pool, pinball machines or video games
- Auction houses
- Betting agencies and gaming lounges
- Caravan parks and camping groups – except for permanent residents or other people who have no permanent place of residence and their visitors
- Casinos, except for selling food or beverages for take-away
- Entertainment and indoor recreation facilities, such as theatres, cinemas, music halls, concert halls and dance halls
- Food and drinks premises (except for take-away)
- Hairdressers
- Indoor recreation facilities such as squash courts, indoor swimming pools, gyms, table tennis centres, health studios, bowling alleys and ice rinks (except if providing educational services or childcare)
- Markets, except for food markets
- Nightclubs
- Pubs, micro-breweries, or small distilleries (except for take-away)
- Public swimming pools (except natural swimming pools, which may open)
- Places of worship, except for the purposes of conducting a funeral, educational services or childcare
- Spas, nail and beauty salons, waxing salons, tanning salons, tattoo parlours, massage parlours
- Strip clubs and sex services

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The following gathering activities are permitted with restrictions in the Greater Sydney region:

Premises or event type	Requirements for these types of venues
Funerals	Up to 10 people allowed including an outdoor funeral or memorial service or gathering afterwards.
Holiday home or short-term rental	Up to 5 people allowed unless all the people staying in the home are from the same household
Outdoor gatherings or organised groups including for outdoor recreation or fitness	4 square metres per person and no more than 10 people. This limit does not apply for: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• schools, early education and care facilities• gatherings of people in the same household• people working or attending a tertiary institution• funerals• emergencies• people fulfilling a legal obligation and• moving home or moving your business to a new premises For a list of exemptions visit the NSW government website.
Places of public worship	Places of worship must be closed to members of the public
Public transport	4 square metres per person, capacity limits re-introduced
Property inspections	May only be conducted by private appointment for one person only
Workplaces	Can attend workplace if a person cannot do the work at home. 4 square metres per person.

These rules will apply until **11:59pm on Friday 30 July 2021**. For up-to-date information about the latest restrictions visit the NSW Government's [What you can and can't do under the rules](#) website.

Other areas of NSW:

- Household visits: A maximum of 5 visitors to a household, including children
- Indoor and outdoor settings including weddings and funerals: 4 square metres per person. Masks compulsory in all indoor non-residential settings, including workplaces and at organised outdoor events
- Dance and gym classes limited to 20 per class (masks must be worn)
- Drinking while standing at indoor venues will not be allowed

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- Singing by audiences at indoor shows or by congregants at indoor places of worship will not be allowed
- Dancing will not be allowed at indoor hospitality venues or nightclubs
- Dancing will be allowed at weddings, but only for the wedding party (no more than 20 people)
- Outdoor seated events: limited to 50% seated capacity

Face masks

Mandatory wearing of face masks

You must wear a fitted face mask in **all parts of NSW** if you are in an indoor public venue or an organised outdoor gathering.

These venues include:

- workplaces – including as a volunteer or for a charitable organisation
- using public transport, hire vehicles, taxis and rideshare services including taxi queues
- waiting for public transport at a bus or light rail stop, train station or ferry
- supermarkets and shopping centres
- organised outdoor events
- bank branches
- post offices
- dance, gym or fitness facilities
- hairdressing, nail, beauty, tanning and waxing salons
- spas, tattoo parlours, massage parlour
- betting agencies
- entertainment facilities such as cinemas, music and concert halls
- major recreation facilities such as stadiums, showgrounds, theme parks racecourses and motor racing tracks
- places of public worship
- residential care facilities (excluding residents of the facilities)
- working in a hospitality venue and deal directly with the public

You do not have to wear a face mask at home or when visiting someone else's home. However, NSW Health strongly recommends wearing face masks if you are unable to physically distance from people you do not live with.

These rules apply until **11:59pm on Friday 30 July 2021**.

In addition, face masks must be worn indoors when in:

- NSW airports, including the passenger waiting area
- Domestic aircraft travelling into or out of NSW, including during landing and take-off from NSW or flying in NSW airspace

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From **Tuesday 13 July 2021**, in Greater Sydney including the Blue Mountains, Central Coast, Wollongong and Shellharbour, residents, staff and visitors must wear a fitted face mask in indoors area of common property in residential buildings.

You do not need to wear a mask inside your own apartment.

Mandatory wearing of face masks does **not** apply to:

- People aged 12 years and under
- People with a physical or mental health illness or disability that makes wearing a fitted face mask unsuitable

Face masks may be removed for short periods of time in some circumstances, for example you can take your face mask off for eating or drinking, engaging in strenuous physical exercise, working alone in an indoor area until another person enters the room, or to communicate with someone who is deaf or hard of hearing. However, you must resume wearing the face mask as soon as practicable after the circumstance ends. For more information go to [Exemptions from wearing a face mask](#).

These rules are updated from time to time. To find out the current rules about where you must wear face masks, go to this NSW Government webpage – [Face masks must be worn in some places](#).

Wearing face masks in all other situations

NSW Health strongly recommends that people wear face masks in the following situations:

- indoor settings where physical distancing is difficult
- any areas where community transmission of COVID-19 is known to have happened.

To find out more about face masks go to this [NSW Government webpage](#).

COVID-19 hotspots

COVID-19 health alerts are constantly changing. For the latest information on COVID-19 hotspots go to the Government webpage [Latest COVID-19 case locations in NSW](#) and follow the latest health advice for any outbreaks. If you have been in any of the locations named in the Government website, you should follow the health advice immediately.

If you have COVID-19 symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath or a runny nose, you should get tested and self-isolate. To find a free COVID-19 testing clinic near you, go to the [COVID-19 testing clinic webpage](#) and enter your postcode.

If you think you may have COVID-19 call the National Coronavirus Helpline **1800 020 080** – open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If you need translating and interpreting services call **131 450** and they will put you through.

Self-isolation

You must self-isolate if you:

- have COVID-19
- are a close contact of someone with COVID-19
- have been identified by an authorised contact tracer as a close contact of a COVID-19 case
- are a returned traveller exempt from hotel quarantine
- have been tested for COVID-19 and are awaiting results

Self-isolate means that you:

- must stay where the doctor has told you to be. This might be at home or at a medical facility.
- must stay in that place until you are medically cleared of the virus
- cannot leave your home or place you are staying unless there is an emergency, or you need to get medical care.

No-one else can enter the place where you are self-isolating, unless they normally live there, or they are providing you with medical or emergency care.

For more information about [how to self-isolate go to the NSW Health website](#).

Providing your personal details when entering business premises

To help with contact tracing, it is mandatory for NSW businesses to use electronic check-in methods to collect customer details. To find out more go to the NSW Government's [Customer record keeping](#).

Businesses and organisations are required to collect the following details from you when you enter their premises:

- Your full name
- Your phone number and your email address (where possible)
- The date and time of entry and time of exit (where possible)

Most businesses will collect this information with a QR code that you scan on a smart phone. If you don't have a smart phone, the business will have another option for you to check in.

If you don't provide these details you will not be allowed to enter the premises.

International travel and mandatory quarantine

International travellers who arrive in NSW and have been overseas in the last 14 days:

- must enter quarantine for at least 14 days. This period can extend up to 24 days.
- stay in accommodation organised by the government. You do not have a choice of where you stay.
- get tested for COVID-19 when in quarantine. Even if the result is negative you still need to remain for the quarantine period.

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From 18 July 2020 the NSW Government began charging returning international travellers for their hotel quarantine accommodation. From 29 January 2021, this includes people from New Zealand. For more information see our factsheet: [COVID-19: Mandatory quarantine – what do I need to know?](#)

Interstate travel

Before planning to travel interstate, you must check current restrictions for NSW Hotspots. Some NSW residents may be prevented from crossing state or territory borders. See links below.

[Victoria](#) (Victoria Legal Aid also has information available on the [Vic/NSW border restrictions webpage](#))

[Tasmania](#)

[ACT](#)

[Queensland](#)

[Northern Territory](#)

[South Australia](#)

[Western Australia](#)

What does physical distancing mean?

Physical distancing means that you should not stand close to people, touch people or gather in groups.

Things you can do to physically distance are:

- Don't shake hands, hug or kiss as a greeting
- Keep 1.5 metres between yourself and other people, where possible

You will not break the law if you forget to do these things. But it is very important for our health and safety that you try to distance yourself from other people at all times.

What are my options if I get a fine?

The options to deal with your fine are:

- Pay the fine or organise with Revenue NSW to make instalment payments over time
- Ask for a review of the fine through [MyPenalty](#) on the Revenue NSW website
- Elect to dispute the fine in the Local Court through [MyPenalty](#) on the Revenue NSW website (seek legal advice first)

If you get a Public Health Order fine you can get free legal advice, so you know the best option for you.

What if I can't pay my fine by the due date?

If you can't pay your fine you have the option to:

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- Make instalment payments over time. These can be small payments each fortnight if you are in financial hardship or on a Centrelink benefit.
- Clear your fines through a [Work and Development Order \(WDO\)](#) if you are eligible
- Request to have the fine waived by Revenue NSW if you have serious financial, medical or domestic problems.

What will happen if I don't pay my fine?

If you don't pay or make arrangements to pay your fine, Revenue NSW have enforcement powers to:

- Suspend your driver licence
- Cancel your car registration
- Take money from your bank account or wages
- Get the Sheriff to seize and sell things you own

Each time Revenue NSW takes enforcement action they add fees to your fine. So don't ignore a fine you can't pay, get help quickly.

If you get a NSW public health order fine, contact LawAccess NSW on **1300 888 529** for free legal help.

Where can I find more information?

For the most up to date information on what you can and cannot do under the rules go to the [NSW government website](#).

If you have received a Public Health Order fine and want to discuss your options directly with [Revenue NSW](#) you can contact them on **(02) 7808 6934** (8:30am to 5:00pm Monday – Friday).

Redfern Legal Centre has a [Public Health Laws](#) factsheet on their website.

For COVID-19 health questions or to check symptoms call the National Coronavirus Helpline on **1800 020 080** (open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week).

How can I get help?

For free legal help call **LawAccess NSW** on **1300 888 529** or [call your local Legal Aid NSW office](#).

There is also a series of [factsheets about COVID-19 and the law](#) available on the Legal Aid NSW website to assist you to manage all the changes that are happening in our community.

If you need an interpreter, call the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450 and ask for LawAccess NSW. If you find it hard to hear or speak, call the National Relay Service on 133 677 and ask for LawAccess NSW or visit www.relayservice.gov.au.

This factsheet is intended as a general guide to the law. Do not rely on this information as legal advice. We recommend you talk to a lawyer about your situation. This information is correct at the time of writing, however, it may change.