

# COVID-19 and heart disease

## All you need to know to protect your heart

**COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a new type of Coronavirus. People living with heart disease are at higher risk of severe complications from COVID-19.**

Whilst the reasons for the link between COVID-19 and heart disease are still being investigated, our knowledge of similar viruses shows that, when a virus targets the lungs, a person's heart may need to work harder to pump blood to the rest of the body. This can cause further heart problems, and worsen existing heart conditions.

### The COVID-19 virus can lead to:



**Heart muscle damage & related complications**



**Increased heart attack risk**



**Worsening of existing heart conditions**

## Five steps to protect your heart health

### 1. Keep your distance and practice good hygiene

To avoid COVID-19 infection, follow these Department of Health instructions on good hygiene and social distancing:



Wash your hands often, using soap and water



Cover your coughs and sneezes with your elbow or a tissue



Use alcohol-based hand sanitisers



Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth



Practice physical distancing to limit close contact with others

## 2. Keep looking after your heart and stay connected with your doctor

Continue to follow your doctor's advice about your medications and other actions you need to take to look after your heart health.



### Medicines

Continue taking your medicines as prescribed, including those used to manage your blood pressure. Talk to your pharmacist about new home medicine delivery options available for people with heart disease. You can order prescription medicines over the phone and have these items delivered to your home. Some pharmacies may use Australia Post to deliver medicines.



### Stay connected with your doctor remotely

To minimise your risk of exposure to COVID-19, people with heart disease can access Medicare subsidised GP and specialist services remotely; this is done by videoconference or telephone. If you need to see your doctor, call ahead to find out what phone or video services are available.

## 3. Don't ignore a medical emergency

Our health system is busy fighting COVID-19. However, your heart health matters, and medical emergencies still require urgent care. Get medical help if the symptoms of your heart condition become severe or become worse quickly.



**If you are experiencing symptoms of a heart attack call triple zero (000) immediately.**

## 4. Get your flu shot

Influenza ('the flu') can trigger heart attacks. The flu vaccine helps to prevent influenza infection and prevent heart attacks. The cross over between the winter influenza season and the COVID-19 pandemic makes it even more important to get the flu vaccine as soon as possible.

People with heart disease are eligible to receive a free flu shot every year under the National Immunisation Program. Call your doctor or pharmacist to book a time for your flu shot.

## 5. Stay active and eat healthy foods

The COVID-19 pandemic is disrupting many aspects of our daily lives and routines. Isolation at home, and other physical distancing measures, can make it harder to start and keep healthy habits. Visit our Heart Foundation website for tips on keeping active at home, maintaining a heart healthy diet and staying socially connected.

 For more information on COVID-19 visit the Department of Health website: **health.gov.au**