

COVID-19 contact risk assessment for general workplace settings



Updated: 24 November 2021

Note: This document reflects the latest NSW Health operational guidance to support the response to COVID-19 exposures in general workplace settings. It will continue to be updated regularly, informed by experience, feedback and emerging evidence.

Scope

This document is for NSW Health staff, businesses and other organisations to guide the assessment and management of situations where an infectious worker has attended a workplace.

The guidance describes COVID-19 contact risk assessment for workplace settings including, but not limited to, offices, hospitality venues, retail premises, community pharmacies, TAFE/universities, supermarkets, warehouses and construction sites. It builds on [CDNA National Guidelines for Public Health Units](#).

This guidance is **not** for household contacts, social contacts, contacts on aircraft, contacts in schools, or contacts in healthcare and residential facilities including aged care, correctional centres or other settings where cases and contacts interact frequently with people at high risk of severe illness.

If there is a worker who tests positive for COVID-19 in your workplace, follow the step by step [guidance for businesses](#).

NSW Health contact definitions

A person may be classified as a close or casual contact if they:

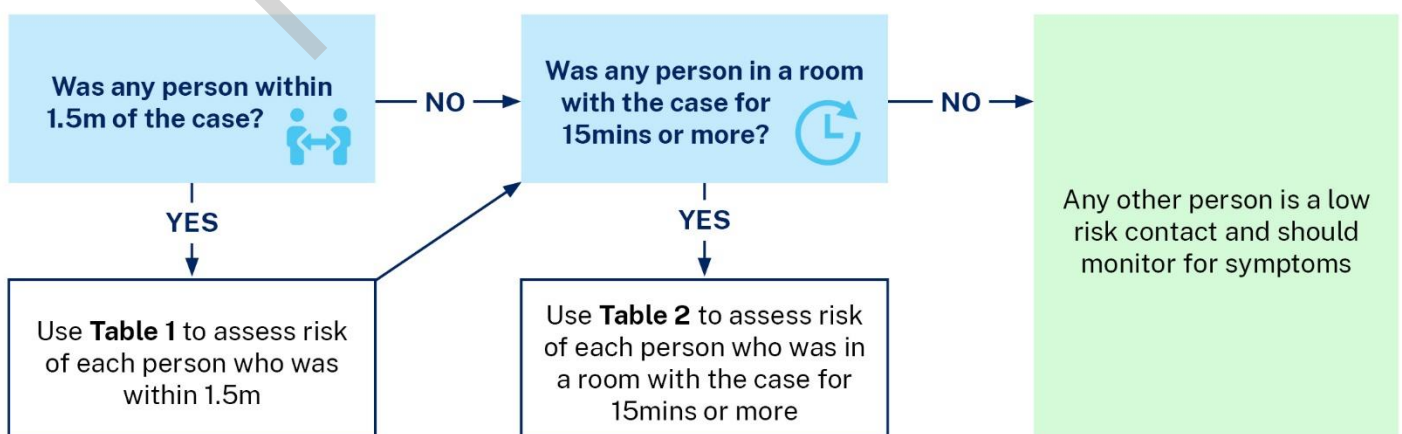
- Had **close-range (<1.5m)** contact with the case during the case's infectious period
- Were **in a room** with the case for **15 minutes or more** during the case's infectious period.

Vaccination status and masks further differentiate the level of risk.

NSW Health staff may upgrade the general contact classification when information suggests there is a high risk of transmission or that transmission has taken place. This may include classifying a fully vaccinated person as a close contact.

Process for assessing workplace risk

Figure 1: Process for assessing workplace risk.



Note: If a person was within 1.5m of a case and in a room for 15 minutes or more with a case, the contact status should be assessed for each type of contact and the highest category selected.

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Table 1: Contact definitions for workers who had **close-range (<1.5m)** contact with a case.

Type of close-range contact	Masks*	Vaccination status of the exposed person**	
		Partial or none	Full
Direct physical contact	Yes or no	Close	Casual
Conversation while within 1.5 m	Yes	Close	Low risk
	No	Close	Casual
Within 1.5m for less than 1 minute	Yes or no	Low risk	Low risk
Within 1.5m for between 1 minute and 15 minutes [†]	Yes	Casual	Low risk
	No	Close	Casual
Within 1.5m for 15 minutes or more [†]	Yes or no	Close	Casual

Table 2: Contact definitions for workers who were **in a room** with a case for **15 minutes or more**.

Size of room	Masks*	Vaccination status of the exposed person**	
		Partial or none	Full
Less than 100 m ²	Yes or no	Close	Casual
Between 100 m ² and 300 m ²	Yes or no	Casual	Low risk
More than 300 m ²	Yes or no	Low risk	Low risk

* Yes = masks properly worn by **both** case and contact for the duration of the period of contact.

** Full vaccination is 14 days following 2nd dose.

† Cumulative time over 24hrs

Considerations

- The worker's infectious period**

A worker's infectious period is from 48 hours before symptoms appeared. If the worker is asymptomatic, they should be considered infectious from 48 hours before they received a positive test result.

- Vaccination status**

A person is considered fully vaccinated from 14 days after their second dose of an approved vaccine.

- Masks**

Effective mask wearing is when both the worker and contact have worn a mask covering their mouth and nose for the duration of the period of contact.

Contact management

Close contacts

Should follow the advice for close contacts:

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/advice-for-contacts.aspx>

Casual contacts

Should follow the advice for casual contacts:

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/covid-19-casual-contact.aspx>

Low risk contacts

Should monitor for symptoms and if symptoms develop get a PCR test and self-isolate.