

# 2022 WINTER PREPAREDNESS RESPIRATORY ILLNESS

The ACT Government is prepared to respond to COVID-19 and influenza over the winter period. We have looked at a variety of scenarios that might arise and how they could be managed.

In addition to COVID-19, we are expecting widespread flu this winter as this will be the first significant flu season in 2 years. Our plan ensures we can scale our response depending on the needs of the community, and to balance health, social and economic factors.



**Stay home if unwell**

## TESTING AND SURVEILLANCE



### Surveillance: knowing what viruses are causing respiratory illness in our community

We will continue to recommend COVID-19 testing for people with symptoms and high-risk close contacts. We will:

- use genomic sequencing for COVID-19 hospital cases, outbreaks in high-risk settings and recent international arrivals to inform our surveillance of COVID-19 in the ACT.
- continue to use well established surveillance systems for influenza.
- test for other respiratory viruses, as clinically appropriate.

### Testing: knowing who needs to isolate and get treatment

Testing continues to be an important part of our response. We will:

- review testing capacity as required (both PCR and RAT) with adequate facilities, skilled workers and stockpiles.
- ensure equity and availability of testing for everyone in our community.

### Isolation and quarantine: stopping spread in the community

To stop spread of illness in the community, we will continue to require people with COVID-19 to isolate at home.

There may be changes to quarantine settings for close contacts based on how much illness there is in the community and how the health care system is coping. ACT Government managed quarantine facilities will continue to remain available.

We will continue to advise anyone with respiratory symptoms to stay at home to reduce transmission of all respiratory viruses.

## PUBLIC HEALTH SOCIAL MEASURES - stopping spread in the community



We may use Public Health Social Measures to help slow virus transmission over winter if they are needed to support the health system and essential services to function.

Any legally mandated public health social measure used will be proportionate to the situation. Examples of previous measures include mask use, density limits, and recommendations to work from home.

## PATHWAYS TO CARE AND TREATMENT - preventing severe illness



We are planning for ongoing COVID-19 alongside the first flu season experienced for two years.

We have pathways to link people at risk of severe illness with the right care and treatment to prevent this. We will continue to:

- link people to appropriate services to provide them with the care they need, including specific treatments for influenza or COVID-19.
- provide accessible information so people know what they need to do to access care and how to determine if they are eligible for medications.
- support health professionals with information about all medication options and new treatments, as they become available.

## VACCINATION PROGRAM - preventing serious illness



Vaccination remains the best protection from serious illness and hospitalisation due to COVID-19 and influenza. We will continue to provide COVID-19 vaccination through ACT Government vaccination clinics. The annual flu vaccination program is also rolling out at GP surgeries, pharmacies and selected ACT government health clinics.

We can surge our vaccination program and facilities as required. We will continue to follow national and international best practice.

We will continue to provide community outreach to people who have difficulty accessing mainstream services to ensure everyone in our community has the opportunity to be vaccinated.

## COMMUNITY INFORMATION - keeping everyone informed



We continue to focus on community education and providing information to Canberrans about the current situation in the ACT. This includes clear communication about being COVID Smart and updates on any changes to health measures that may be required.

We will keep the community informed through a range of channels including:

- online and local media
- forums, face to face and community in-reach programs
- translated and easy read materials, tailored to community needs.

**Our response continues to be supported by highly-skilled people, systems and processes**



**Stay COVID Smart**  
Go to [covid19.act.gov.au](https://covid19.act.gov.au)



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