



Clinician alert #86 – all clinicians

Effective from 11 July 2022

Management of potential SARS-CoV-2 reinfection

New information

- Increasing COVID-19 case numbers, including reinfections, are expected in Western Australia driven by Omicron subvariants BA.4 and BA.5.
- The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) has advised that COVID-19 reinfections may occur as early as 4 weeks (28 days) after recovery from a previous infection.
- If more than 4 weeks have passed since release from isolation, recovered cases should be:
 - tested for SARS-CoV-2 if they develop new COVID-19 symptoms
 - managed as a case if they test positive for SARS-CoV-2
 - managed as a close contact if they meet the close contact definition.

Testing for SARS-CoV-2

- Anyone with COVID-19 compatible symptoms **4 or more weeks** after release from isolation should be tested for SARS-CoV-2.
- Both Rapid Antigen Testing (RAT) and PCR are acceptable methods for diagnosing SARS-CoV-2.
- Those at a higher risk of severe illness who have a negative RAT should be tested by PCR to ensure access to COVID-19 oral treatments if eligible.
- Requesting clinicians should consider the use of multiplex PCR in patients at higher risk of severe illness to assist with timely diagnosis of COVID-19 and/or influenza in those eligible for treatment.

People who develop new symptoms within 4 weeks of release from isolation

- People with symptoms consistent with an acute respiratory infection should stay at home when sick.
- Natural infection with SARS-CoV-2 provides some protection against reinfection, but reinfection is possible. Those who are significantly immunocompromised are at higher risk of reinfection.
- People who develop new acute respiratory symptoms **within 4 weeks** of release from isolation should:
 - stay home until symptoms resolve
 - be tested for respiratory viruses, including SARS-CoV-2, in situations where a diagnosis will inform clinical or public health management.
- People who develop COVID-19 compatible symptoms **within 4 weeks** of release from isolation, and who have had a symptom free interval since recovery from COVID-19, may be considered to have a COVID-19 reinfection if they return a positive RAT. It is recommended that such people be advised to stay at home for 7 days.

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