

Respiratory Infections (including COVID) Safe Plan

Business name: Monash University
Site location: All campuses and Monash locations
Approval: Peter Marshall COO
Contact [person: A/Prof Ines Rio CMO
Version Issue: Version 1
Date approved: 29 February 2024
Review date: 28 February 2026

Introduction

The health and safety of the Monash community is of the highest priority, and Monash is committed to protecting its community.

This plan builds on version 34 of the COVID Safe Plan (5 July 2023). It recognises that COVID-19 is now an established and ongoing health issue which no longer constitutes a public health emergency of international concern and that there are many respiratory viruses that can cause illness in the Monash community. As such, this version has evolved from a COVID Safe Plan to a Respiratory Infections Safe Plan that includes COVID, and outlines a set of practical infection control measures for all respiratory infections across Monash sites.

Come to Campus Well

- Consistent with the Government's health messaging, Monash does not want staff, students, contractors and visitors to attend Monash University locations in person, including campuses and offices, if they have COVID-19 or other respiratory infections.
- If staff, students, contractors or visitors are unwell with respiratory or COVID-19 symptoms, and at a Monash location, they are encouraged to put on a mask and return home. Students living at Monash Residential Services (MRS) should contact their Residential Support Team or an MRS staff member who will provide support.
- All persons attending Monash University locations are encouraged to practice good hand hygiene and coughing and sneezing etiquette to decrease the spread of respiratory infections (including COVID).
- Additionally, for persons who are attending a Monash location and have tested positive to COVID-19 or any other respiratory infection, or who are close contacts the use of a well-fitting mask and decreasing physical contact with others by maintaining a physical distance of at least 1.5 metres from others is recommended.

Health care

- Staff and students who are unwell with COVID or a respiratory illness, or test positive for COVID, should refer to [Monash University COVID-19 Updates](#) web page and to the [Victorian Department of Health website](#).
- If staff and students are unwell with respiratory or COVID-19 symptoms, they are encouraged to take a rapid antigen test for COVID-19 and, if positive and [eligible obtain antivirals](#) and review [Monash](#)

[advice](#).

- Staff and students are encouraged to have a regular GP and to seek medical support with their GP or [The University Health Service](#) if they are unwell.
- If staff, students or their families require urgent but not emergency care, [Priority Primary Care Centres](#) are available seven days a week and provide cost-free care for those with or without a Medicare card and [Healthdirect](#) provides a non-urgent health advice line (Nurse on Call) 24 hours a day on Phone: 1800 022 222.

Absence from University

- For staff, sick leave, carer's leave and flexible work arrangements are available as per their employment contract: The Monash University [Enterprise Agreement \(Academic & Professional Staff\) 2019](#) or [Trades and Services staff \(Building and Metal Trades staff\) 2009](#), as applicable to the staff member in accordance with their contract of employment. Monash policies and procedures. Policies and procedures that may be relevant include [Sick and Carers Leave Procedure](#), [Working from Home Procedure](#) and [Flexible Work Procedure](#).
- If a staff member requires additional time and/or support to recover, they may be eligible to access accrued leave entitlements such as:
 - sick leave supported by a medical certificate;
 - annual leave;
 - long service leave; or
 - special leave without pay, where all accrued leave entitlements have been exhausted.
- For students unable to attend their scheduled classes, the Chief Examiner will make the necessary learning arrangements, including access to class resources that they may miss, through Moodle (including, where possible, access to Zoom links for online classes). If students are unable to attempt or complete their assessments due to illness, they can apply for [Special Consideration](#).

Face masks

- Face masks may continue to be required in specific settings including health and aged care and environments where people may be more vulnerable to COVID-19 and other respiratory infections. Staff and students in these environments must follow the direction of the host organisation and any public health requirements.
- Face masks are not compulsory at Monash locations; however, individuals are able to use these if they choose to.
- Monash University may require the use of face masks in certain settings or for certain activities where this is endorsed by the Monash University Chief Medical Officer or by other public health requirements.
- For persons who have tested positive to COVID-19 or any other respiratory infection, quality and fitted face masks are recommended to be worn for at least 7 days after a positive test when attending a Monash location.
- For persons who are a close contact to a person with COVID-19, if attending a Monash location, quality and fitted face masks are recommended to be worn for at least 7 days after close contact.
- Monash University does not routinely provide face masks. However, if a staff member or student becomes unwell with respiratory symptoms and requires a face mask, masks should be available in local areas.

Practice good personal hygiene

- Monash University encourages regular hand washing or hand sanitising. In order to provide convenient opportunities for staff and students to hand sanitise, hand sanitiser stations are available at several major entry points to its buildings.
- The University cleaning team ensures soap is available in all bathrooms, with a method provided to dry hands.

- To promote correct techniques for handwashing and sanitising hands, and encourage good coughing and sneezing etiquette, Monash University provides regular messaging via digital communications and posters displayed in various University locations.

Campus cleaning

- The routine cleaning of University buildings focuses on cleaning high touch surfaces and contact points.
- Staff and students are encouraged to keep their workspaces clean and to wipe down their furniture and equipment before and after work/study or exercise.

Well ventilated spaces

- The University has undertaken a comprehensive assessment of all of its buildings to ensure the ventilation systems are effectively providing sufficient outside air which reduces risk of transmission of respiratory infections (including COVID-19).
- Monash University ensures the ventilation systems meet or exceed Australian Standard 1668.2, with regular monitoring and maintenance of the systems in place.
- The ventilation systems of all central teaching spaces have been reviewed and, where appropriate, upgrades completed to ensure teaching can be conducted at normal room occupancy.
- The [outcomes of the ventilation review](#) are available on [Monash Health Safety & Wellbeing](#) website.

Events at Monash University

- The University holds many events where a large number of people gather. As part of the [risk assessment for these events](#), organisers should consider the spread of respiratory infections (including COVID).
- Consideration should be given to whether events can occur outdoors or in well ventilated spaces.
- It is recommended that communications to attendees include to not attend if they are unwell or have respiratory symptoms.

Vaccinations

- All staff and students are encouraged to be vaccinated for vaccine-preventable infections according to their age and risk profile as per the [National Immunisation Program \(NIP\) Schedule](#).
- NIP vaccinations are available at the University Health Service and usually through GP clinics.
- All staff and students are encouraged to stay up-to-date with their [COVID-19 vaccination](#) according to their age and risks. The Healthdirect website has a link to vaccination sites on [COVID-19 vaccine clinic](#), including [The University Health Service](#), which also provides [boosters for eligible groups](#).
- All staff and students are encouraged to have an annual seasonal influenza vaccine.
- Monash University Health Safety & Wellbeing coordinates a free annual influenza vaccination service for eligible staff members and for eligible students at Monash Residential Services.
- Influenza vaccine is also available through [University Health Services](#). Influenza vaccine is free for students and staff eligible under the [National Immunisation Program \(NIP\) Schedule](#), with private vaccine available for those not eligible under the NIP.
- Staff and students working or on placement in healthcare settings must comply with the infectious diseases testing, vaccination, immunisation and documentation direction of their Faculty and the host organisation. They may be required to provide vaccination information to support these activities.
- For staff or students working in health care or other sensitive settings, COVID-19 and other vaccination and isolation requirements may be [required in prescribed settings](#) under Directions from the Secretary, Department of Health.