

In-person visits

Information and frequently asked questions for visitors

The safety of prisoners, staff and visitors remains the primary priority for Corrections Victoria. To enable the safe return of in-person visits, procedures have been adjusted to include a minimum vaccination threshold for return of visits, vaccination requirements for prisoners and staff, rapid antigen testing, as well as existing strategies (e.g., screening, hygiene practices and use of PPE).

As restrictions ease in the Victorian community, Corrections Victoria has recommenced in-person visits.

Only prisoners who are up to date with their vaccinations (in line with the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation guidance) will be able to have in-person personal visits. Visitors will also need to meet vaccination requirements.

Visits will be strictly conducted in accordance with coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission reduction measures.

This document outlines common Frequently Asked Questions for visitors.



Access to visits

How long will in-person visit sessions be?

In-person visits can be booked for a maximum of two hours. Some locations may allow shorter or longer visits, dependent on room capacity, demand and operational requirements. Locations will advise of the permitted visit length when booking visits. Restrictions on time limits assists in mitigating the risk of COVID-19 transmission, along with other infection prevention and control measures.

Who will be eligible to participate in an in-person visit?

Prisoners that are up to date with their vaccinations (in line with the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) guidance) will be eligible for an in-person personal visit.

Vaccination requirements – prisoners

Only prisoners that are up to date with their vaccinations (in line with the ATAGI guidance) or have a medical exemption will be eligible for an in-person personal visit.

In order to access a visit, prisoners will need to have had:

at least two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine

and

a third dose within six months of having received their second dose

Prisoners are eligible for their third dose three months after from the second dose and overdue after six months.


If a prisoner has had COVID-19 in the last 3 months and that has impacted their ability to receive a booster they may still access in person visits.

Vaccination requirements – personal visitors

Visitors will also need to meet vaccination requirements. These requirements depend on the age of the visitor.

Visitor age	Requirement
16+	At least two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine <u>and</u> a third dose within six months of having received their second dose
12–16	At least two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine.
5–11	At least two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine
Under 5	No requirement.

If a visitor has had COVID-19 in the last 3 months and that has impacted their ability to be up to date with vaccination requirements (as above) then they may still access in person visits.



These visitors are a low risk to prisoners, staff and other visitors given they are in an increased immunity phase post infection.

The visitors must show a dated Department of Health notification of when they tested positive to COVID-19.

If a visitor cannot provide this evidence, the visitor will not be permitted to enter the prison.

Visitors who have medical exemptions will need to discuss this with the prison and provide their official evidence of medical exemption in writing prior to the visit.

All locations will continue to provide remote (video) visits to prisoners, irrespective of vaccination status, in recognition of the importance of maintaining relationships with family, friends and community.

Visitor screening

What screening processes will visitors be required to undergo?

To ensure the safety of our visitors, prisoners, residents, and staff, there will be several COVID-19 screening measures in place.

As a condition of entry visitors will need to:

show proof of vaccination or an authorised medical exemption

undertake a rapid antigen test

comply with PPE requirements.

If a visitor refuses a rapid antigen test or returns a positive result, presents any risk through the screening questions, or is unable to present proof of vaccination (for visitors 5 years and older), they will not be permitted to enter the prison.

Visitors who refuse to participate in the required screening processes, PPE requirements (i.e., mask wearing) or present as symptomatic on arrival at the correctional facility will be refused entry.

Vaccination Requirement

How will vaccination status be verified?

When visitors arrive, they will be asked to show their evidence of vaccination, and evidence of vaccination for any accompanying children aged 5 years and older. Visitors may be asked to provide proof of age for children under 5 years.

Visitors will be asked to present either their COVID-19 digital certificate saved on their phone or the ServiceVic app, or hardcopy immunisation history statement, on arrival at the gatehouse.

Fraudulently obtaining a certificate or creating a fake document is a serious offence.

International visitors who have received COVID-19 vaccinations overseas must present a certificate that meets the following criteria:

- Issued by a national or state/provincial-level authority or an accredited vaccination provider

- Written in English or accompanied by a certified translation


- Containing at a minimum:

 - name as it appears in the traveller's passport*

 - date of birth or passport number or national identity number

 - the vaccine brand name, and

 - the date of each dose or the date on which a full course of immunisation was completed.



** If the name on the vaccination certificate differs from the name on the passport, the traveller will need to show evidence of being the certificate's rightful holder, such as a driver licence.*

How can visitors get help demonstrating vaccination status?

Visitors requiring assistance preparing proof of vaccination prior to the visit, can be directed to:

Service Victoria | Proof of vaccination | multiple languages and video demonstration -

<https://service.vic.gov.au/covid-19/add-covid-19-digital-certificate>

Services Australia - Proof of vaccination - multiple languages |

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/information-in-your-language/products/how-get-proof-your-covid-19-vaccinations>

Local libraries and community organisations may also provide assistance.

What happens if visitors can't be vaccinated?

Visitors and prisoners who are unvaccinated can continue to receive remote (video) visits.

If proof of a genuine medical exemption has been demonstrated, the visit may be able to go ahead as a box visit with prior approval. Proof of medical exemption from COVID-19 vaccination must be demonstrated through presentation of a completed and signed Australian Immunisation Register medical exemption form, by the person's medical practitioner.

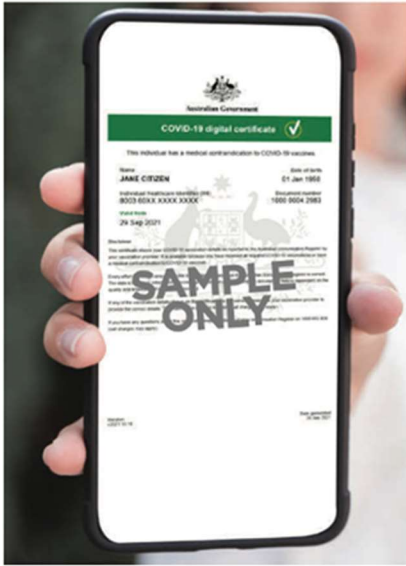
Children under 16 years of age are able to participate in a contact visit if they have a genuine medical exemption and this has been provided to the prison.

In such cases, prisoners must seek approval from the prison General Manager prior to the day of the visit, allowing time for the location to receive health advice on heightened infection prevention and control measures to ensure the safety of prisoners, visitors, and staff.

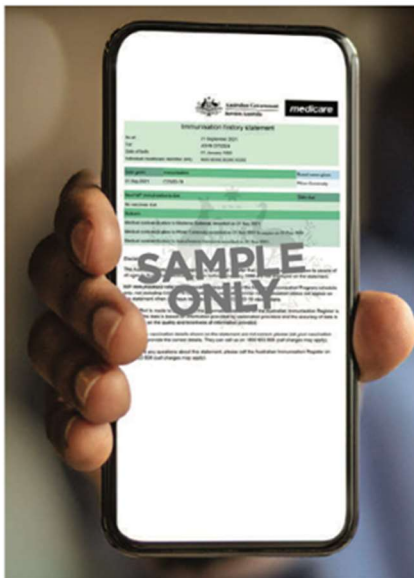
Proof of medical exemption

If someone cannot get any of the approved COVID-19 vaccines for medical reasons, their doctor needs to update their record on the Australian Immunisation Register to show that they have a medical exemption. Once it has been processed, their exemption can be downloaded onto their COVID-19 digital certificate and added to the Service Victoria app or downloaded from myGov onto their smartphone. They can also print a copy of their immunisation history statement which shows COVID-19 vaccinations or exemptions. The duration of their medical exemption will be listed on their COVID-19 certificate.

COVID-19 digital certificate - medical exemption



Immunisation history statement - medical exemption



(Shown on a Medicare online account through myGov)

(Shown as colour print)

(Shown as black & white print)

Can an unvaccinated prisoner without a medical exemption still have a Court ordered visit?

Yes. Prisoners who are unvaccinated and do not have a medical exemption are able to access court ordered visits via box visit.

How will changes be communicated to prisoners and visitors?

Prisoners will be advised of the changes through local communication channels (e.g., Prisoner Liaison Group meetings) and fact sheets will be provided.

Information on vaccination and screening requirements for visitors attending in-person visits will be published on the Corrections Victoria website. The prisoners will be encouraged to direct their visitors to the Corrections Victoria website for an overview of the requirements.

How will Corrections Victoria continue to support prisoners wishing to get vaccinated?

Health Services continue to run regular vaccination clinics across the correctional system. Any prisoner who wishes to get vaccinated can speak with Health Services staff directly to make a vaccination appointment. Alternatively, they can speak to custodial staff who can refer the request to the health services team, where an appointment will be made for the next available clinic.

What will be provided/who will be available to address prisoners' questions regarding vaccine efficacy and safety?

A member of the health services team onsite can be contacted anytime to speak with prisoners one-on-one and address any questions or concerns relating to vaccine hesitancy. Information sessions are also available on request including in languages other than English. Yarning sessions or similar cultural support are also available for Aboriginal people.

Information about vaccinations developed especially for Corrections Victoria will be available on television communication screens at many locations, and also in poster form.

Rapid Antigen Testing

What is a Rapid Antigen Test?

Rapid Antigen Testing is a quick screening tool to help detect COVID-19 in people who are not displaying any symptoms of COVID-19.

While it does not replace the need for standard COVID-19 (PCR) testing, it can be used in addition to infection prevention measures - such as mask wearing, hand hygiene and physical distancing, to protect ourselves and the community from COVID-19.



Above: An example of a rapid antigen test kit



How does Rapid Antigen Testing work?

Rapid Antigen Testing involves a nasal swab, using a small cotton bud, which can be performed by, or under the supervision of, trained healthcare practitioners or by Rapid Antigen Testing trained staff, supervised by a trained healthcare practitioner. The swab/sample is then mixed with a chemical solution, which is placed onto the 'testing strip' to test for any presence of COVID-19. Results will be visible within 15 – 20 minutes.

What are the possible results of a Rapid Antigen Test?

The Rapid Antigen Test result can be negative, inconclusive/invalid, or positive.

Visitors with a negative rapid antigen test result can proceed with their visit, assuming all other screening and PPE requirements are met.

If the test result is unclear (i.e., inconclusive), visitors will be asked to take a second rapid antigen test. The result of the second test will determine whether they can enter the visitor centre.

If the test result is positive visitors will not be able to participate in the visit. Staff are unable to perform a second test after a positive result. A positive result is an indication of a probable COVID-19 diagnosis. Visitors who get a positive test result on a rapid antigen test will be asked to leave the location along with anyone accompanying them.

What if visitors refuse to take the rapid antigen COVID-19 surveillance test?

If visitors refuse to take the test, they will not be permitted entry into the facility.

COVID-19 surveillance testing for people entering high-risk industry settings is on the advice of the Department of Health and their expert knowledge in infection prevention and control practices.

Can a visitor present a recent PCR result instead of doing a rapid antigen test on arrival?

No. To ensure a consistent approach to screening of visitors, only the result of a rapid antigen test taken at the visit location will be accepted.

Will the rapid antigen test be self-administered?

Yes. On visit day, Corrections staff will explain to visitors how rapid antigen testing is to be administered. While visitors may complete the swab themselves, the process will be supervised by Corrections staff. The test result will need to be checked by Corrections staff to be confirmed.

For additional information regarding administering a rapid antigen test refer to the following YouTube video: [Test yourself for COVID-19 with our rapid antigen self-test - YouTube](#)

Will children be required to undergo a rapid antigen test prior to entering the prison?

All children 3-years and older will need to participate in rapid antigen testing at the prison location, before entering the prison.

Who will administer the rapid antigen test with children?

It is advised that if a child is 12-17 years old and wants to do a test themselves, a parent or guardian should supervise to ensure that they are following the steps correctly.

Children under 12 years old will need a parent or guardian to perform the test on them.

Corrections staff will be available to provide advice as required, to ensure parents and guardians feel confident to complete the testing process with their child/ren.



What happens if one person in the visit receives a positive RAT?

If a visitor within a group of family members/friends attending for an in-person visit receives a positive RAT, the visitor and anyone accompanying them will be declined entry and asked to leave the location.

Are there any other exemptions from a RAT?

Yes. Children aged under 3 years are exempt from rapid antigen testing at entry.

Visitors who have recovered from COVID-19 and cleared from isolation within the last 35 days are also exempt from rapid antigen testing at entry. They will need to produce their clearance from the Department of Health as evidence of exemption from RAT to take part in a visit. They will still need to meet all other screening requirements.

Location staff will support all other visitors to complete the test on arrival. Information on rapid antigen testing and what to expect, will be made available on the Corrections Victoria website to support visitors to prepare for their in-person visit. What steps will Corrections Victoria take if it receives advice that a COVID-19 positive person attended a visit or was present in the visits centre?

All correctional facilities have an Outbreak Prevention and Management Plan. The plan outlines key actions to take to manage a confirmed case. Key actions include appropriate cleaning, and notifications internally for a confirmed positive case.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

What PPE will be required for visits?

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) requirements are dependent on health advice and occasionally change. All visitors must wear PPE as instructed.

Corrections staff will inform visitors of what is required on the day of the visit. Any PPE visitors need to wear (e.g., masks, eye protection, etc.) will be supplied on the day of the visit by the prison location. Current advice requires:

Visitors are required to wear an N95/P2 respirator

Prisoners are required to wear an N95/P2 respirator

Staff supervising visitor screening and visit centres are required to wear protective eyewear and an N95/P2 respirator.

Will children be required to wear masks?

Corrections staff will advise visitors of mask requirements on the day of the visit.

Current advice requires children eight-years and over to wear a N95 mask. Children under the age of eight are encouraged to wear surgical masks indoors but will not be required to.

Where children's masks are required, they will be supplied by the prison on the day of the visit.

What if visitors are medically exempt from wearing a mask?

For people who are exempt from wearing a face mask or protective eye wear, a medical exemption will need to be provided in writing prior to the visit. Prisons are a higher-risk setting, as such, corrections staff need to have confidence there is a genuine medical exemption and that the risks of entering a site without wearing a face mask can be managed safely. You will need to receive confirmation of acceptance of exemption prior to arrival.

Will locations have access to masks for visitors? Can they wear their own?

Visitors will be supplied with a N95 mask, provided by the location. Visitors will be asked to remove their own mask and wear a supplied mask for the duration of the visit.

Both adult and children's masks will be available.

Hygiene practices and physical distancing

How will visitors be supported to follow infection control processes?

Infection control processes such as the use of hand sanitiser and physical distancing will be enforced.

Visitors will be encouraged to practice good hygiene practices before, during and after in-person visits, and to maintain a distance of 1.5 metres between themselves and other people.

Is any physical contact permitted during visits?

Visitors and prisoners will be permitted to fist bump or elbow bump at the start and end of their visit. Outside of this hello and goodbye greeting, prisoners and visitors should maintain physical distancing for the duration of the visit.

Will visit centres be cleaned between groups?

Following/prior to each visit, cleaning and disinfecting will be undertaken on frequently touched surfaces and any surfaces touched during the visit (i.e., tables, chairs etc).

Disinfectant wipes are to be readily available for staff and visitors as needed.

Will capacity limits be in place?

Yes, the capacity limit is to 1:2 (1 person per 2 square metres). Signage displaying the maximum occupancy limit will be displayed in the visit centre. Staff are to adhere to capacity limits in the visit centre and visit areas.

Where weather permits, outdoor visits should be encouraged.

Will child resources and play equipment be available?

Whether play equipment, toys and books will be available to children will depend on the health advice at the time of the visit.

Will canteens be available?

Visit centre canteens and vending machines will not be available at this time.

Property and money

Can visitors drop off property when they are attending the location for an in-person visit?

Prisoners can have mail and parcels dropped off at the prison by their visitors, or persons not on their valid visitor list. Alternatively, property can be posted to the prison. Some items are not permitted or are controlled in prisons as per the Corrections Regulations 2019, and it may be best to contact the prison, prior to sending in property. When posting property, senders are encouraged to include contact details on the back of envelopes as this will assist to return any mail to a sender, where the mail has been seized, requested to be censored or the prisoner refuses to accept it.

Visitors leaving money for a prisoner must be recorded on that prisoners' valid visitors list.

Visit termination

What conditions will lead to a visit termination?

All visitors and prisoners must comply with the transmission reduction measures in place at each prison.

In the event that a visitor or prisoner breaches these measures or refuses to comply, the visit can be terminated immediately.

Inappropriate, disrespectful and abusive behaviour will not be tolerated, and any visitor demonstrating behaviour that would jeopardise prison security or the safety of prisoners, staff or other visitors, may be banned from visiting for a period of time as determined by the General Manager.

Video visits

Will video visit options remain in place?

Video visits will continue to operate and will remain an option for prisoners, irrespective of vaccination status.

Legal and professional visits

What COVID safe measures are in place for legal and professional visits?

The transmission reduction measures for in-person visits also apply to legal and professional visitors, including vaccination requirements, rapid antigen test, PPE, hand hygiene and physical distancing.

Professional visitors who do not meet the in-person contact visit requirements due to a genuine medical exemption for vaccination may be eligible to attend an in-person non-contact (box) visit where there is a genuine need for the visit to occur in-person as opposed to via remote delivery.

Video visits remain the only option available to professional visitors who do not meet the screening requirements.

Further Information

Where can visitors find further information?

For more information regarding the return of in-person visits or for updates regarding prison operations and coronavirus (COVID-19), please visit Corrections Victoria's website www.corrections.vic.gov.au.

The Corrections Victoria website will be updated to reflect any changes to processes.

Queries or requests can be directed by phone to the appropriate prison location, or can be sent via email to corrections@justice.vic.gov.au

Additional resource for parents, carers, and guardians



Attending for an in-person visit will look a little different due to the additional protective measures that have been put in place to prevent COVID-19 coming into a correctional facility. Children or vulnerable adults might be nervous about coming in for a visit because they don't know what to expect.

Sharing information about what to expect when they attend for a visit can help to reduce any fear or anxiety they may have.



It can help to describe what they can expect like telling a story, who will be there, what will they see, how long will it take, what will happen and how it might feel. Below are some suggestions on how to prepare them for their visit.

What to expect on visit day

The staff will be wearing a mask over their mouth and nose and they might have glasses over their eyes. They wear these to protect you, me, and themselves from spreading germs.

Talking to children about COVID-19

You may have heard grown-ups talking about COVID-19. It's a virus, like a germ, that is so tiny we can't see it with our eyes. The only way to know for sure if you have the virus in your body is to do a test.

Explaining what will happen – COVID-19 screening

Before our visit, we will all do a COVID-19 test to make sure we don't have the virus in our body. I will be with you the whole time and will do the test for you. We check your nose for COVID-19 using a swab stick that I will show you first.

The swab stick is very soft like a sponge. I will put the swab stick inside your nose to take a sample for the test. When the swab stick goes inside your nose, it might tickle or feel uncomfortable. You can hold my hand while we do the test and we can count together. It will only take a few seconds.

The location staff will also ask us some questions about how we are feeling.