

National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) Criteria for Covid-19 Testing

1. Confirmed cases

A confirmed case is a person with laboratory confirmation (RT-PCR assay) of infection with the Covid-19 virus, irrespective of clinical signs and symptoms. Symptomatic cases are considered infectious from two days before to 14 days after symptom onset.

2. Suspected case, i.e. a person to be tested for Covid-19

A suspected Covid-19 case includes any person presenting with an acute (14 days or less) respiratory tract infection or other clinical illness compatible with Covid-19, or an asymptomatic person who is a close contact to a confirmed case. **(Note:** Asymptomatic close contacts should not be routinely tested, even if they meet the case definition. However, testing may be indicated in certain circumstances, such as in institutions such as care homes.)

In the context of Covid-19, the key respiratory syndrome symptoms consist of ANY of the following:

- cough
- sore throat
- shortness of breath
- anosmia (loss of sense of smell) or dysgeusia (alteration of the sense of taste), with or without other symptoms, which may include fever, weakness, myalgia (muscle pain) or diarrhoea.

3. Close contact

A close contact is defined by the NICD as a person having had face-to-face contact of one metre or less or having been in a closed space with a confirmed Covid-19 case for at least 15 minutes. This includes, amongst others:

- all persons living in the same household as a Covid-19 case and people working closely in the same environment as a case;
- healthcare workers or other people providing direct care for a Covid-19 case while not wearing recommended personal protective equipment (PPE), e.g. gowns, gloves, a N95 respirator or eye protection; and
- persons in any mode of transportation sitting within two seats in any direction of a Covid-19 case, including travel companions, persons providing care and crew members serving in the section where the case was seated.

The NICD previously defined persons who are at high risk of infection separately to persons suspected of infection. The Council for Medical Schemes has noted that high-risk persons are now included in the new definition, with the exception of people who are admitted to hospital with pneumonia.