COVIDSafe APP FAQs

This FAQ information has been compiled using the Department of Health COVIDSafe webpage information and the COVIDSafe FAQs as well as a range of other sources.

**WHAT IS COVIDSafe?**

**COVIDSafe is an app developed by the Australian Government to improve contact tracing of people who test positive for COVID-19.** This allows State or Territory health officials to contact you, if you have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive to the virus.

COVIDSafe uses Bluetooth in order to identify when two people with the app come one-and-a-half metres of one another for 15 minutes or more.

It does this by logging an encrypted code for each individual also using the app that you come into close contact with, as well as the date, time and proximity of the contact. It will also be recorded on the other users’ devices.

The code is generated from a user’s name, age range, mobile number and postcode - information that is required when a user downloads the app.

The data is encrypted and stored on a user’s phone for a rolling period of 21 days before being deleted. No physical location data is collected by the app on either Android or iOS (iPhone operating system).

**What about consent, security and privacy?**

**When you register for COVIDSafe you will be asked for consent to collect your:**

* **Mobile phone number** – to be able to contact you if required for contact tracing
* **Name** – to confirm health officials are talking to the right person when they contact trace. You can use a pseudonym, however.
* **Age Range** – to be able to prioritise contact tracing
* **Postcode** – to make sure health officials from the right State or Territory can contact you and can prioritise cases e.g. in hotspot areas.

COVIDSafe records the following contact data: (1) the encrypted user ID, (2) date and time of contact and (3) Bluetooth signal strength of other COVIDSafe users with which you come into contact. This information will also be recorded on the other users’ devices. The signal strength allows the distance between users to be determined.

New laws are currently being brought in to restrict access to data to state and territory health authorities only. Until this happens, the Health Minister has used his powers under existing laws (called a determination) to restrict access to the app.

Any other access or use, including by law enforcement agencies, will be a criminal offence. The determination also makes it illegal to coerce someone into downloading COVIDSafe, meaning that you cannot be made to use the app as a condition for your employment or for entering a building.

**How does the app work?**

**Bluetooth signals are used to determine when you’re near another COVIDSafe user. Every instance of close contact between you and other COVIDSafe users is collected to create contact information.** The data is encrypted and stored on your phone. To work, the app needs to be left open with Bluetooth and push notifications turned on.

The app uses your phone’s Bluetooth system. The app does not need to be connected to the internet continuously. It will, however, occasionally download temporary IDs and this should require less than 1MB of data each day.

If you have an Android phone (i.e. not an iPhone), you will also need to enable location permissions because of the Android protocols for Bluetooth. It’s important to note this isn’t the same as turning on location services. The app does not track your location. Location permissions must be enabled for COVIDSafe to access Bluetooth on Android and Apple devices. And access to your phone’s battery optimiser is required keep the app running in the background.

Any data relating to contact-tracing cases involving a person with coronavirus will be stored for at least the next six months and will be deleted at the end of the pandemic.

**How do I download the app?**

**The COVIDSafe app can be installed onto any Android or Apple mobile with an Australian number and Bluetooth.**

**Step One:** Check whether your smartphone is an iPhone or an Android phone (if it's not an iPhone, it's likely an Android).

**Step Two:** Connect to Wi-Fi or ensure you are using your phone's data.

**Step Three:** On an iPhone, you will have a little blue app called App Store. Click on that and search for "COVIDSafe". On an Android phone, the app will be colourful and say "Google Play". Go in there and search "COVIDSafe".

**Step Four:** Click the button that says "Get" or "Download". Wait for it to download, then open the app on your phone and follow the prompts.

**Can I delete my personal information?**

If you uninstall COVIDSafe, this will automatically delete all information stored on your device and stop other users from collecting your contact tracing data.

Uninstalling COVIDSafe will not automatically delete any information already uploaded to the data store, or any of your contact data stored on another user’s device in the last 21 days, which could still be uploaded to the data store and used for contact tracing purposes. If you wish any of your contact data uploaded to the data store to be deleted you need to fill out a [reques](https://covidsafe-form.service.gov.au/)t.

**Can I access my personal information?**

You can:

* change your registration information by deleting and re-installing COVIDSafe
* delete the registration information we hold in the data store by contacting us
* register the correct information on COVIDSafe
* You cannot access the data held in the data storage.

All information will be stored in a cloud-based data store in Australia. All data will be deleted from the data store after the COVID-19 pandemic is concluded as determined by a Biosecurity Determination.

**How will I be contacted if I test positive?**

A health official will contact you and ask for your consent to enter your mobile number into the data store to generate a PIN (a short code) to be sent to you by SMS (text message).

If you enter the PIN, you will give your consent to upload contact data on your device into the data store to share with health officials to enable contact tracing.

If another user tests positive to COVID-19, they may upload their contact data, which may include details of their contact with you.

**How will I be contacted if I have been in touch with someone positive?**

A phone call will be made to users who have had close contact with another user once that user is independently confirmed as having COVID-19. This phone call will be made by State or Territory health officials. Close contact information is only available to State and Territory health officials once a user is confirmed as coronavirus positive, and the user securely uploads the information stored on their phone. These calls will only be made to close contacts that have occurred in the 21 days before the information has been uploaded. This early notification allows users to quickly self-quarantine and seek medical attention.

**Who is a “close contact” for notification purposes?**

State and Territory public health officials will have the contact information for other users who have been within approximately 1.5 metres of the infected user for 15 minutes or more.