

Vulnerable Workers

Who's at risk?

Some people are at greater risk of more serious illness with COVID-19:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
- People 65 years and older with one or more chronic medical conditions
- People 70 years and older, and
- People with compromised immune systems

The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee advice is that there is limited evidence at this time regarding the risk in pregnant women and so, at present, pregnant women are not included on the vulnerable workers list.

What to do

Firstly, take into consideration the characteristics of the worker, the workplace and the work. Wherever possible redeploy vulnerable people to non-customer-based roles and if this is not possible consider alternate arrangements with the worker to accommodate a workplace absence.

When assessing if a worker is a vulnerable person for the risk of exposure to COVID-19 consider the following:

- The characteristics of the worker,
- Features of the workplace and
- The nature of the work.

Remember to keep all information about a worker's medical conditions confidential.

Reasonably Practicable

How do I know what is 'reasonably practicable' to manage the risk of a vulnerable person contracting COVID-19?

Deciding what is reasonably practicable to protect workers or other persons from harm requires taking into account and weighing up all relevant matters, including the degree of harm that is likely to occur if the risk of contracting COVID-19 eventuates.

If a vulnerable person contracts COVID-19, it can result in serious illness or death, which means the degree of harm that might result from the risk or hazard is very high. You must consider all available control measures to limit exposure to vulnerable people, even if the likelihood of them contracting COVID-19 may be low. This includes whether they can work from home in their usual or other role.

Next Steps

Before asking a vulnerable worker to take leave, you must **FIRST TRY** to identify and manage risks to your worker's health and safety at the workplace, including considering whether the nature of their job or the workplace increases their risk of exposure to the virus. You may need to explore options for the worker to work from home or arrange for them to move temporarily into a different role.

If the risks to your worker's health and safety at the workplace cannot be effectively managed, then you must consult with them about alternate arrangements such as taking leave.

Your worker can continue to access all available entitlements, including leave, under the relevant enterprise agreement, award, contracts of employment and any workplace policies. If you are unsure of your obligations regarding worker entitlements, you can contact the Fair Work Ombudsman.