**What is the COVIDSafe app used for?**

* The COVIDSafe app will help state and territory health officials to conduct **contact tracing** and to quickly contact people who may have been exposed to COVID-19.
* In some cases, particularly early in the infection, people might show no or very mild symptoms and be able to spread the virus on to others without realising.
* The COVIDSafe app speeds up the current manual process of finding people who have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19. This means you’ll be contacted more quickly if you are at risk. This reduces the chances of you passing on the virus to your family, friends and other people in the community.

**What is contact tracing?**

* Contact tracing is a public health technique used to track infectious diseases and identify those who might have been exposed to an infectious disease and need to see a doctor. It is used for many diseases, such as meningococcal disease. The COVIDSafe app will help to make this process easier strictly for COVID-19.

**How does the COVIDSafe app work?**

* When you download the app you are asked to provide your:
	+ name
	+ mobile number
	+ postcode
	+ age range (e.g. 30-39 years of age)
* You will receive a confirmation SMS text message to complete installation. The system then creates a unique encrypted reference code just for you.
* COVIDSafe recognises other devices with the COVIDSafe app installed and Bluetooth enabled.
* When two (or more) app users come into close proximity their phones exchange Bluetooth signals and make a series of ‘digital handshakes’.
* An encrypted hash code, which is the only data shared as part of the Bluetooth ‘digital handshake’. The digital handshake information does not include any identifiable data, is all recorded on the phone. It is only uploaded to the highly secure information storage system when consent is given by a positively diagnosed user.
* The proximity for a close contact is approximately 1.5 metres, for a period of 15 minutes or more.
* When the app recognises another user, it notes the date, time, distance and duration of the contact and the other user’s reference code.
* To be effective, users should have the app running in the background of their phone whenever they are coming into contact with people. Users of the app will receive daily notifications to ensure the app is running.
* The app uses a rolling 21 day window to allow for the maximum 14 day incubation period, and the time taken to confirm a positive test result. The rolling 21 day window allows the app to continuously note only those user contacts that occur during the coronavirus incubation window. Contacts that occurred outside of the 21 day window are automatically deleted from the user’s phone.
* **The COVIDSafe app does not collect your location.**
* Before sharing private information, the user will be prompted to upload the information. The data is only available with consent to state and territory health officials. Ventia or other officials will not have access to the information.

**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.

**When an app user tests positive for COVID-19**

* When someone is diagnosed with COVID-19, state and territory health officials will ask them or their parent/guardian who they have been in contact with. If they have the COVIDSafe app and provide their permission, the encrypted contact information from the app will be uploaded to a highly secure information storage system which only state and territory health officials have access too.
* State and territory health officials will then:
	+ use the contacts captured by the app to support their usual contact tracing
	+ call people to let them know they may have been exposed
	+ offer advice on next steps, including:
		- what to look out for
		- when, how and where to get tested
		- what to do to protect friends and family from exposure
* **Health officials will not name the person who was infected.**

**Why does Ventia encourage the use of the COVIDSafe app?**

* Ventia will not be mandating the use of the app. In line with Government, the app will remain voluntary.
* However, Ventia notes that the app will make it easier for health officials to track close contacts, particularly for trying to recall those up to 3 weeks earlier. This will help to identify those who require monitoring and minimise the spread of the virus in the community and the workplace.
* Identifying those who might have close contact with the virus earlier will help to return the community and business back to normal operations sooner.

**I’m concerned about my privacy?**

* According to the Australian Information Commissioner and Privacy Commissioner, personal information collected **can only** be used for purposes related to contact tracing. It also puts important deletion and time limitations in place.
* Commonwealth and state/territory law enforcement agencies will not be allowed to access any information from the app, unless investigating misuse of that information itself.
* It will be a criminal offence to use any app data in any other way.
* The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) will have independent oversight of personal information handling by the app and the National COVIDSafe Data Store.

**What about my information during or after the pandemic?**

* You can delete the COVIDSafe app from your phone at any time. This will delete all COVIDSafe app information from your phone. The information in the secure information storage system will not be deleted immediately. It will be destroyed at the end of the pandemic, but you can request to have it delete earlier if you wish.

**Where can I get more information about the COVIDSafe app?**

* About the app - <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/covidsafe-app>
* FAQs - <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/covidsafe-app-faqs>
* Privacy statement - <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/covidsafe-application-privacy-impact-assessment>