

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Steps to Prevent Illness

There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).
The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus.

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.



Older adults and people who have severe underlying chronic medical conditions like heart or lung disease or diabetes seem to be at higher risk for developing more serious complications from COVID-19 illness. Please consult with your health care provider about additional steps you may be able to take to protect yourself.

Take steps to protect yourself



Clean your hands often

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.



Avoid close contact

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Put distance between yourself and other people if COVID-19 is spreading in your community. This is especially important for people who are at higher risk of getting very sick.

Take steps to protect others



Stay home if you're sick

- **Stay home** if you are sick, except to get medical care. Learn [what to do if you are sick](#).



Cover coughs and sneezes

- **Cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow.
- **Throw used tissues** in the trash.
- Immediately **wash your hands** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, clean your hands with a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.



Wear a facemask if you are sick

- **If you are sick:** You should wear a facemask when you are around other people (e.g., sharing a room or vehicle) and before you enter a healthcare provider's office. If you are not able to wear a facemask (for example, because it causes trouble breathing), then you should do your best to cover your coughs and sneezes, and people who are caring for you should wear a facemask if they enter your room. [Learn what to do if you are sick](#).
- **If you are NOT sick:** You do not need to wear a facemask unless you are caring for someone who is sick (and they are not able to wear a facemask). Facemasks may be in short supply and they should be saved for caregivers.



Clean and disinfect

- **Clean AND disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily.** This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks.
- **If surfaces are dirty, clean them:** Use detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.

To disinfect:

Most common EPA-registered household disinfectants will work. Use disinfectants appropriate for the surface.

Options include:

- **Diluting your household bleach.**
To make a bleach solution, mix:

- 5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) bleach per gallon of water
OR
- 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water

Follow manufacturer’s instructions for application and proper ventilation. Check to ensure the product is not past its expiration date. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser. Unexpired household bleach will be effective against coronaviruses when properly diluted.

- **Alcohol solutions.**
Ensure solution has at least 70% alcohol.
- **Other common EPA-registered household disinfectants.**
Products with [EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens](#) [7 pages] claims are expected to be effective against COVID-19 based on data for harder to kill viruses. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.).



[More handwashing tips](#)

[Hand Hygiene in Healthcare Settings](#)

More information	
Symptoms	Travelers
What to do if you are sick	Individuals, schools, events, businesses and more
If someone in your house gets sick	Healthcare Professionals
Frequently asked questions	



Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

How COVID-19 Spreads

COVID-19 is a new disease and we are still learning how it spreads, the severity of illness it causes, and to what extent it may spread in the United States.

How COVID-19 Spreads

Person-to-person spread

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

Can someone spread the virus without being sick?

- People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest).
- Some spread might be possible before people show symptoms; there have been reports of this occurring with this new coronavirus, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

Spread from contact with contaminated surfaces or objects

It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

How easily the virus spreads

How easily a virus spreads from person-to-person can vary. Some viruses are highly contagious (spread easily), like measles, while other viruses do not spread as easily. Another factor is whether the spread is sustained, spreading continually without stopping.

The virus that causes COVID-19 seems to be spreading easily and sustainably in the community (“community spread”) in some affected geographic areas.

Community spread means people have been infected with the virus in an area, including some who are not sure how or where they became infected.

Situation in U.S.

- In addition to CDC, many public health laboratories are now testing for the virus that causes COVID-19. [View CDC's Public Health Laboratory Testing map.](#)
- With this increase in testing, now 19 states have reported cases of COVID-19 to CDC. [View latest case counts, deaths, and a map of states with reported cases.](#)
- U.S. COVID-19 cases include:
 - Imported cases in travelers
 - Cases among close contacts of a known case
 - Community-acquired cases where the source of the infection is unknown.

Latest Updates on this Outbreak

International Areas with Sustained (Ongoing) Transmission

Last updated February 28, 2020

- [China \(Level 3 Travel Health Notice\)](#)
- [Iran \(Level 3 Travel Health Notice\)](#)
- [Italy \(Level 3 Travel Health Notice\)](#)
- [Japan \(Level 2 Travel Health Notice\)](#)
- [South Korea \(Level 3 Travel Health Notice\)](#)

Related Links

- [All COVID-19 Travel Health Notices](#)
- [COVID-19 Situation Summary](#)

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Content source: National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD), Division of Viral Diseases



Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

People at Risk for Serious Illness from COVID-19

If you are at **higher risk** of getting very sick from COVID-19, you should:

- **Stock up on supplies.**
- Take **everyday precautions** to keep space between yourself and others.
- When you go out in public, keep away from others who are sick, limit close contact and wash your hands often.
- **Avoid crowds** as much as possible.
- Avoid **cruise travel** and non-essential air travel.
- During a COVID-19 outbreak in your community, **stay home** as much as possible to further reduce your risk of being exposed.

COVID-19: What Older Adults Need to Know

Jay Butler, Deputy Director for Infectious Diseases at CDC, describes preventative measures to help protect older adults from COVID-19.

Who is at Higher Risk?

Early information out of China, where COVID-19 first started, shows that some people are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. This includes:

- Older adults
- People who have serious chronic medical conditions like:
 - Heart disease
 - Diabetes
 - Lung disease

If a COVID-19 outbreak happens in your community, it could last for a long time. (An outbreak is when a large number of people suddenly get sick.) Depending on how severe the outbreak is, public health officials may recommend community actions to reduce people's risk of being exposed to COVID-19. These actions can slow the spread and reduce the impact of disease.

If you are at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19 because of your age or because you have a serious long-term health problem, it is extra important for you to take actions to reduce your risk of getting sick with the disease.

Get Ready for COVID-19 Now

- Have supplies on hand
 - Contact your healthcare provider to ask about obtaining extra necessary medications to have on hand in case there is an outbreak of COVID-19 in your community and you need to stay home for a prolonged period of time.
 - If you cannot get extra medications, consider using mail-order for medications.
 - Be sure you have over-the-counter medicines and medical supplies (tissues, etc.) to treat fever and other symptoms. Most people will be able to recover from COVID-19 at home.
 - Have enough household items and groceries on hand so that you will be prepared to stay at home for a period of time.
- Take everyday precautions
 - Avoid close contact with people who are sick
 - Take everyday preventive actions
 - Clean your hands often
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing, or having been in a public place.
 - If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
 - To the extent possible, avoid touching high-touch surfaces in public places – elevator buttons, door handles, handrails, handshaking with people, etc. Use a tissue or your sleeve to cover your hand or finger if you must touch something.
 - Wash your hands after touching surfaces in public places.
 - Avoid touching your face, nose, eyes, etc.
 - Clean and disinfect your home to remove germs: practice routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces (for example: tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, toilets, faucets, sinks & cell phones)
 - Avoid crowds, especially in poorly ventilated spaces. Your risk of exposure to respiratory viruses like COVID-19 may increase in crowded, closed-in settings with little air circulation if there are people in the crowd who are sick.
 - Avoid all non-essential travel including plane trips, and especially avoid embarking on [cruise ships](#).
- If COVID-19 is spreading in your community, take extra measures to put distance between yourself and other people to further reduce your risk of being exposed to this new virus.
 - Stay home as much as possible.
 - Consider ways of getting food brought to your house through family, social, or commercial networks
- [Have a plan for if you get sick:](#)
 - **Consult with your health care provider for more information about [monitoring your health for symptoms suggestive of COVID-19](#).**
 - Stay in touch with others by phone or email. You may need to ask for help from friends, family, neighbors, community health workers, etc. if you become sick.
 - Determine who can provide you with care if your caregiver gets sick

Watch for symptoms and emergency warning signs

- Pay attention for potential COVID-19 symptoms including, fever, cough, and shortness of breath. If you feel like you are developing symptoms, call your doctor.
- If you develop emergency warning signs for COVID-19 get medical attention immediately. In adults, emergency warning signs*:
 - Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath

- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion or inability to arouse
- Bluish lips or face

*This list is not all inclusive. Please consult your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning.

What to Do if You Get Sick

- Stay home and call your doctor
- Call your healthcare provider and let them know about your symptoms. Tell them that you have or may have COVID-19. This will help them take care of you and keep other people from getting infected or exposed.
- If you are not sick enough to be hospitalized, you can recover at home. Follow CDC instructions for [how to take care of yourself at home](#).
- Know when to get emergency help
- Get medical attention immediately if you have any of the emergency warning signs listed above.

What Others can do to Support Older Adults

Community Support for Older Adults

- Community preparedness planning for COVID-19 should include older adults and people with disabilities, and the organizations that support them in their communities, to ensure their needs are taken into consideration.
 - Many of these individuals live in the community, and many depend on services and supports provided in their homes or in the community to maintain their health and independence.
- Long-term care facilities should be vigilant to prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19. [Information for long-term care facilities can be found here](#).

Family and Caregiver Support

- Know what medications your loved one is taking and see if you can help them have extra on hand.
- Monitor food and other medical supplies (oxygen, incontinence, dialysis, wound care) needed and create a back-up plan.
- Stock up on non-perishable food items to have on hand in your home to minimize trips to stores.
- If you care for a loved one living in a care facility, monitor the situation, ask about the health of the other residents frequently and know the protocol if there is an outbreak.



Prevention and
Treatment



Get Your
Household
Ready



What to Do if
You are Sick