



COVID-19

Get Vaccinated: Find a vaccine and learn what you can do after you're fully vaccinated.

How COVID-19 Spreads

Updated May 7, 2021

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Bobby and his dad are protected when they stay home.

They keep protecting themselves when they are outside of their house.

Be like Bobby and his dad

- stay 6 feet apart
- wash your hands
- wear a mask
- avoid crowds

cdc.gov/coronavirus

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COVID-19 spreads when an infected person breathes out droplets and very small particles that contain the virus. These droplets and particles can be breathed in by other people or land on their eyes, noses, or mouth. In some circumstances, they may contaminate surfaces they touch. People who are closer than 6 feet from the infected person are most likely to get infected.

Types of Spread

COVID-19 is spread in three main ways

1. Breathing in air when close to an infected person who is exhaling small droplets and particles that contain the virus.
2. Having these small droplets and particles that contain virus land on the eyes, nose, or mouth, especially through splashes and sprays like a cough or sneeze.
3. Touching eyes, nose, or mouth with hands that have the virus on them.

Protect yourself and others

The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. Protect yourself and others from all ways COVID-19 spreads by taking these prevention actions:

- Get a [COVID-19 vaccine as soon as you can](#).
- Wear a [mask that covers your nose and mouth](#) to help protect yourself and others.
- [Stay 6 feet apart from others](#) who don't live with you.
- Avoid crowds and poorly ventilated indoor spaces.
- [Wash your hands often](#) with soap and water. Use hand sanitizer if soap and water aren't available.

Learn more about what you can do to [protect yourself and others](#).

How COVID-19 Spreads

Anyone infected with COVID-19 can spread it, even if they do **NOT** have symptoms.

How it spreads	How common is this type of spread	How to protect yourself
① Breathing in droplets or particles		
Breathing in air with small droplets or particles that contain the virus when people are less than 6 feet apart	Common	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as you can • Wear a mask • Stay 6 feet apart • Avoid crowds

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid poorly ventilated indoor places
Breathing in air with small droplets or particles that contain the virus when people are far apart or have been in the same enclosed space for more than a few minutes	Uncommon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as you can • Wear a mask • Avoid poorly ventilated indoor places
② Direct splashes and sprays		
By having small droplets and particles that contain virus land on the eyes, nose, or mouth, especially from coughs and sneezes that create sprays and splashes	Common	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as you can • Wear a mask • Stay 6 feet apart
③ Touching eyes, nose, or mouth		
Touching eyes, nose, or mouth with hands that have the virus on them	Uncommon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as you can • Wear a mask • Wash your hands • Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth before washing hands

COVID-19 and animals

COVID-19 can spread **from people to animals** in some situations. Pet cats and dogs can sometimes become infected after close contact with people with COVID-19. Learn what you should do [if you have pets](#).

Reinfection

Cases of [reinfection](#) with COVID-19 have been reported, but remain rare. CDC is actively working to learn more about reinfection to inform public health action.

More Information

- [Scientific Brief: SARS-CoV-2 and Potential Airborne Transmission](#)
- [ASL Video Series: How does COVID-19 Spread?](#)

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