



## COVID-19

# How to Protect Yourself & Others

Updated Feb. 25, 2022



## Get Vaccinated and stay up to date on your COVID-19 vaccines

- [COVID-19 vaccines](#) are effective at preventing you from getting sick. [COVID-19 vaccines](#) are highly effective at preventing severe illness, hospitalizations, and death.
- Getting vaccinated is the best way to slow the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.
- CDC recommends that everyone who is eligible [stay up to date on their COVID-19 vaccines](#), including [people with weakened immune systems](#).



## Wear a mask

- Everyone ages 2 years and older should properly wear a well-fitting mask indoors in public in areas where the [COVID-19 Community Level](#) is high, regardless of vaccination status.
- Wear a mask with the best fit, protection, and comfort for you.
- If you are in an area with a high [COVID-19 Community Level](#) and are ages 2 or older, wear a mask indoors in public.
- If you are sick and need to be around others, or are caring for someone who has COVID-19, wear a mask.
- If you are at increased risk for severe illness, or live with or spend time with someone at higher risk, speak to your healthcare provider about wearing a mask at medium COVID-19 Community Levels.
- People who have a condition or are taking medications that [weaken their immune system](#) may not be fully protected even if they are up to date on their COVID-19 vaccines. They should talk to their healthcare providers about what additional precautions may be necessary.
  - For more information, see [COVID-19 Vaccines for Moderately or Severely Immunocompromised People](#)

[Wearing a mask over your nose and mouth is required](#) on planes, buses, trains, and other forms of public transportation traveling into, within, or out of the United States and while indoors at U.S. transportation hubs such as airports and stations. Travelers are not required to wear a mask in outdoor areas of a conveyance (like on open deck areas of a ferry or the uncovered top deck of a bus).



## Stay 6 feet away from others

- Inside your home: Avoid close contact with people who are sick, if possible. If possible, maintain 6 feet between the person who is sick and other household members. If you are taking care of someone who is sick, make sure you properly wear a [well-fitting mask](#) and follow other steps to protect yourself.
- Indoors in public: If you are not [up to date on COVID-19 vaccines](#), stay at least 6 feet away from other people, especially if you are at [higher risk of getting very sick](#) with COVID-19.



## Avoid poorly ventilated spaces and crowds

- If indoors, [bring in fresh air](#) by opening windows and doors, if possible.
- If you are at [increased risk of getting very sick](#) from COVID-19, avoid crowded places and indoor spaces that do not have fresh air from the outdoors.



## Test to prevent spread to others

- You can choose from many different [types of tests](#).
- Tests for [SARS-CoV-2](#) (the virus that causes COVID-19) tell you [if you have an infection](#) at the time of the test. This type of test is called a **viral test** because it looks for viral infection.
- Regardless of the test type you select, a [positive test result](#) means that you have an infection and should [isolate](#) and inform your [close contacts](#) to avoid spreading disease to others.
- Over-the-counter [self-tests](#) are viral tests that can be used at home or anywhere, are easy to use, and produce rapid results. Anyone can use self-tests, regardless of their vaccination status or whether they have symptoms.
- COVID-19 [self-tests](#) are one of many risk-reduction measures, along with vaccination, masking, and physical distancing, that protect you and others by reducing the chances of spreading COVID-19.



## Wash 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.
- It's especially important to wash your hands:
  - Before eating or preparing food
  - Before touching your face
  - After using the restroom
  - After leaving a public place
  - After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
  - After handling your mask
  - After changing a diaper
  - After caring for someone sick
  - After touching animals or pets
- 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.



## Cover coughs and sneezes

- **If you are wearing a mask:** You can cough or sneeze into your mask. Put on a new, clean mask as soon as possible and wash your hands.
- **If you are not wearing a mask:**
  - Always cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or use the inside of your elbow and do not spit.
  - 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.



## Clean and disinfect

- Clean high touch surfaces regularly or as needed and after you have visitors in your home. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks.
- If someone is sick or has tested positive for COVID-19, disinfect [frequently touched surfaces](#).
  - Use a household disinfectant product from [EPA's List N: Disinfectants for Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) [↗](#) according to manufacturer's labeled directions.
  - If surfaces are dirty, clean them using detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.



## Monitor your health daily

- Be alert for symptoms:
  - Watch for fever, cough, shortness of breath, or [other symptoms](#) of COVID-19.
  - Take your temperature if symptoms develop.
  - Don't take your temperature within 30 minutes of exercising or after taking medications that could lower your temperature, like acetaminophen.
  - Follow [CDC guidance](#) if symptoms develop.
- Monitoring symptoms is especially important if you are running errands, going into the office or workplace, and in settings where it may be difficult to keep a physical distance of 6 feet.



## Follow recommendations for quarantine

- If you come into [close contact](#) with someone with COVID-19: follow CDC's [recommendations for quarantine](#).



## Follow recommendations for isolation

- If you [test positive](#) for COVID-19 or have [symptoms](#): follow CDC's [recommendations for isolation](#).



## Take precautions when you travel

- Follow CDC's [recommendations for domestic and international travel](#).

### Additional Resources

For more information, see:

- [Families with vaccinated and unvaccinated members](#)
- [Improve How Your Mask Protects You](#)
- Information for specific groups of people (link: [COVID-19 Information for Specific Groups of People | CDC](#))

Help protect yourself  
and others



[PDF - 263 KB, 1 page]

### Related Pages

- › [Prevent Getting Sick](#)
- › [Symptoms](#)
- › [How COVID-19 Spreads](#)
- › [If You Are Sick or Caring for Someone](#)
- › [People at Increased Risk](#)
- › [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- › [Hand Sanitizer Use](#)
- › [Quarantine and Isolation](#)