Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

CDC's Response

Updated Aug. 31, 2020 Print

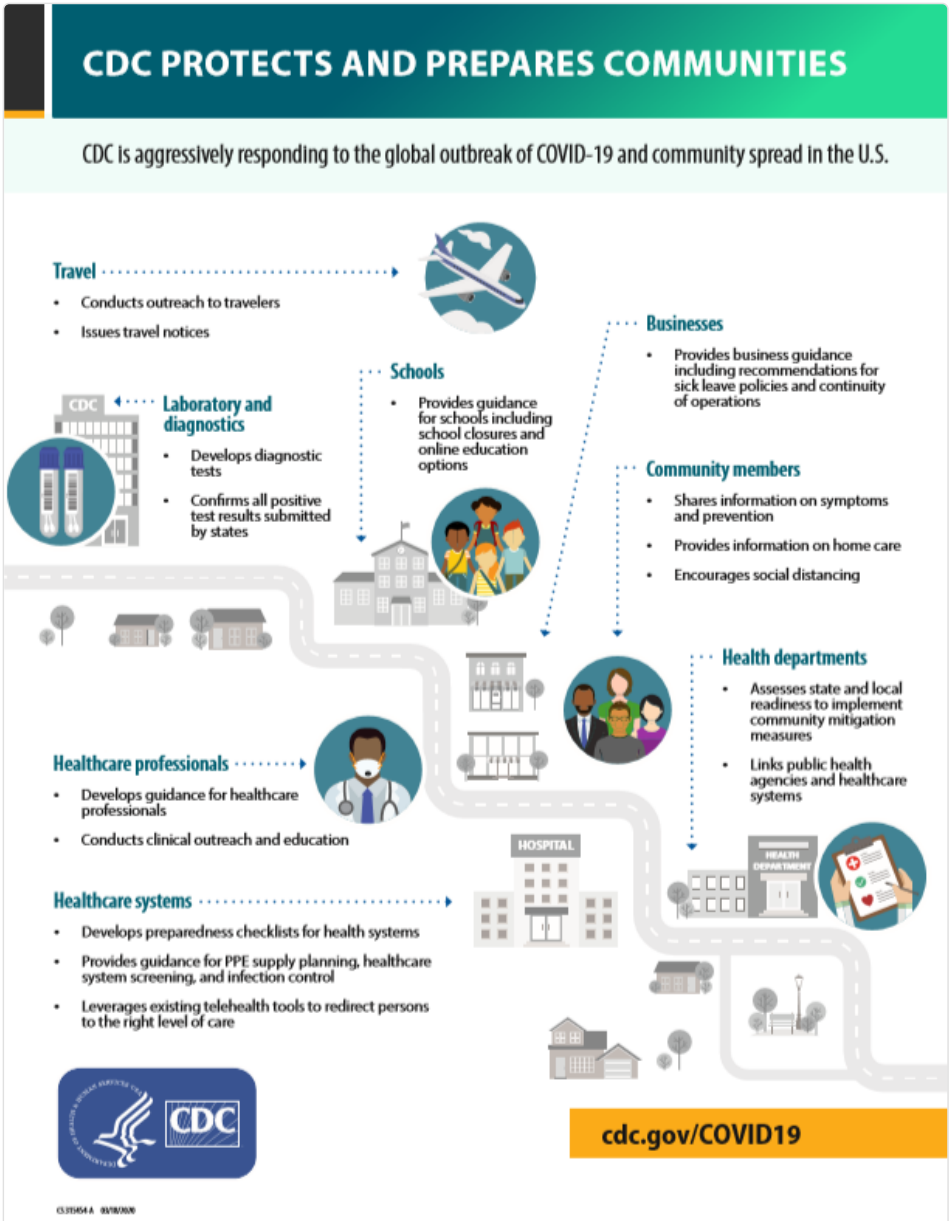
Since launching an agency-wide response to the COVID-19 pandemic on January 21, 2020, CDC has been learning more about how the disease spreads and affects people and communities. Our work helps frontline healthcare workers, communities, and the public to protect themselves and save lives.

Preparing first responders, healthcare providers, and health systems

- Persistent health disparities combined with historic housing patterns, work circumstances, and other factors have put members of some racial and ethnic minority populations at higher risk for COVID-19 infection, severe illness, and death. CDC is working to reduce that gap by learning more about what produces it and giving healthcare workers and other front-line employees the tools they need to close it.
- CDC has a dedicated team investigating multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C), a rare but serious complication seen in some children who had the virus that causes COVID-19 or had been around someone with COVID-19. This team is working to learn more about this syndrome and communicate information quickly to healthcare providers, parents, and caregivers, as well as state, territorial, local, and tribal health departments.
- CDC has launched a new, nationwide initiative to help enhance and complement the efforts of state, tribal, local, and territorial health departments through innovative hiring mechanisms designed to address their surge staffing needs.
- This response complements local efforts to increase capacity using existing CDC field staff, deploying CDC teams to address outbreaks in special settings, and partnering with other federal agencies like AmeriCorps to give states more staffing options.
- It also provides access to a variety of contact tracing and case investigation training products and tools for a diverse and evolving public health workforce.
- CDC is establishing visibility across healthcare systems to understand healthcare use, particularly surges in demand for medical care and associated resources.
- We're also conducting extensive outreach to clinical and hospital professional organizations to ensure health systems are prepared to treat patients.

In addition, CDC:

- Has



CDC Protects and Prepares Communities

- Spanish
- Chinese
- Korean
- Vietnamese

published more than 150 guidance documents to advise healthcare providers on subjects like infection control, hospital preparedness assessments, personal protective equipment (PPE) supply planning, and clinical evaluation and management.

- Has identified people who are at higher risk of getting severely ill from this disease and given them steps they can take to keep from getting sick.
- Created COVID19Surge, a spreadsheet-based tool that hospital administrators and public health officials can use to estimate the demand for hospital-based services,

including how many patients may need ICU care or ventilator support. These data can help hospitals prepare for a possible increase or decrease in cases.

- Is developing a range of respirator conservation strategies, including strategies to make supplies last longer (such as using alternative products like reusable respirators) and extending the use of disposable respirators.
- Is working with supply chain partners to ensure that healthcare workers at highest risk have access to PPE by understanding supply usage, what products are available, and when more aggressive measures may need to be taken.
- Has shared information with stakeholders to help them recognize when to shift the strategies they are using.

Advising businesses, communities and schools

CDC has provided advice that has evolved as more is known about COVID-19.

- Wearing a mask helps stop the spread of COVID-19. CDC has published a list of tips on how to make, clean, and wear masks. Always wear a mask in public settings around people who don't live in your household and when you can't stay 6 feet away from others.
- CDC has produced a series of toolkits that businesses, schools, retirement communities, and other institutions can use to successfully communicate information people can use to protect themselves, family and friends, and their communities.
- CDC has published a list of steps that state and local authorities, businesses, and other institutions can use to plan to scale back community mitigation measures and gradually return to pre-pandemic operations while protecting vulnerable populations.
- These three-step guidance allows leaders to look at a series of six indicators, including case counts, emergency room visits, and testing programs, to help decide when to move from one phase to the next.
- Published a list of actions for people planning events and gatherings to help lower the risk of COVID-19 exposure and spread during gatherings and events.
- We're also providing technical assistance to state and local jurisdictions on testing, surveillance data collection and reporting, contact tracing, infection prevention and control, and outbreak investigation.
- And for individuals, we offer advice on how to prevent infection or safely return to normal activities if you have had COVID-19.

In addition, CDC:

- Created a Community Mitigation Framework to implement mitigation strategies for communities with local COVID-19 transmission.
- Created business guidance to help the public and private sectors ensure they can protect essential workers and help others operate with adaptations like teleworking and flexible sick leave policies.

- Developed guidance for childcare programs, K-12 schools, and colleges and universities to help them plan and prepare for COVID-19 and respond if there is a local outbreak in their community.
- Provided planning guides for COVID-19 that households, community- and faith-based organizations, event planners of mass gatherings, and public health communicators can use.

Sharing our knowledge

From the beginning of the pandemic, CDC has been at the forefront of sharing what we've learned about COVID-19.

- The Household Pulse Survey, a joint effort by CDC and the US Census Bureau, produces a real-time snapshot of people's mental health and access to care during the pandemic. About 100,000 people a week have answered questions about their physical and mental health, as well as job status, spending, and education. The result is a 50-state picture that can be broken down by geography, age, gender, race and ethnicity, and educational level.
- CDC is leading the SARS-CoV-2 Sequencing for Public Health Emergency Response, Epidemiology and Surveillance (SPHERES). This new national genomics consortium will coordinate large-scale, rapid genomic sequencing of the virus that causes COVID-19, allowing public health experts to monitor any changes to the virus, learn more about how it spreads and help identify ways to diagnose and treat the disease.
- CDC's Cases, Data and Surveillance page uses several data streams to track and analyze COVID-19 at the local, state, and national levels.
- CDC developed an rRT-PCR test to diagnose current COVID-19 infection and has helped equip state and local public health laboratories with the capacity to test people for the virus.
- CDC has developed a laboratory serology (antibody) test to help estimate how many people in the United States have been infected with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.
    - This test examines blood samples for proteins your body makes in response to an infection.
    - It's designed to estimate how much of the U.S. population has been infected with the virus and learn how the body's immune system responds to the virus.
- CDC has grown the virus that causes COVID-19 in cell culture, a necessary step for further studies. The cell-grown virus was sent to the National Institutes of Health's BEI Resources Repository for use by the broad scientific community.
- CDC's COVIDView page provides weekly updates on testing, hospitalizations, and mortality for COVID-19-like illness (CLI) and influenza-like illness (ILI) nationwide.

In addition:

- CDC's COVID-NET program provides standardized national data on laboratory-confirmed hospitalizations.
- CDC's *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* publishes the results of COVID-19 outbreak investigations.

- CDC's scientific journal *Emerging Infectious Diseases* has published dozens of studies by researchers studying COVID-19 since the pandemic began.

Maintaining the safety of our borders

CDC has issued extensive COVID-19-related guidance for travelers, both international and domestic, while the U.S. government as a whole has taken unprecedented steps to respond to the public health threat posed by the pandemic.

- CDC maintains a list of advisories by country regarding international travel. This includes a list of countries from which travel to the United States is restricted: Brazil, China, Iran, Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the 29 European nations of the Schengen Area.
    - Foreign nationals who have been in these countries within the past 14 days cannot enter the United States.
    - U.S. citizens, residents, and their immediate family members who have been to any one of those countries within in the past 14 days can enter the United States, but they are subject to health monitoring and possible quarantine for up to 14 days.
- Between January and May 2020, CDC personnel screened more than 250,000 arriving international passengers for signs of illness.

In addition:

- CDC has worked with federal partners to support the safe return of Americans overseas who have been affected by COVID-19.
- CDC has issued a Level 3 Travel Health Notice for cruise ship travel, recommending all people defer travel on cruise ships, including river cruises, worldwide.
    - On March 13, 2020, the Cruise Lines International Association voluntarily suspended cruise travel out of U.S. ports.
    - On April 9, 2020, CDC extended a No Sail order until further notice.
    - Cruise ships have ended their passenger voyages. The last ship to arrive at a U.S. port docked April 20, 2020.
    - CDC is helping cruise lines repatriate large numbers of crew members from those vessels to their home countries.

Spreading the word

CDC has published a variety of communications resources that state and local governments and community organizations can use to support their own response to the pandemic. They include:

- Video messages from CDC scientists and others, including Academy Award Recipient Wes Studi (*The Last of the Mohicans, Avatar*).
- Audio public service announcements (PSAs) that can air on radio stations or in airports.
- A collection of more than 3 dozen flyers and posters developed to support COVID-19

recommendations, which can be downloaded for free and printed on a standard office or commercial printers.

- A social media toolkit of graphics and suggested messages to help communities spread their messages about COVID-19. All content on this page is in the public domain and free for anyone to use.

Last Updated Aug. 31, 2020

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