



Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

MENU >



Households Living in Close Quarters

How to Protect Those That Are Most Vulnerable

Updated Sept. 11, 2020

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This guidance is intended for people living together in close quarters, such as people who share a small apartment, or for people who live in the same household with large or extended families.

People of any age who have [certain underlying medical conditions](#) are at risk for getting COVID-19. Some groups have an [increased risk for severe illness](#) from coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The following information is aimed to help you protect those who are most vulnerable in your household.

Everyone should limit risks

If your household includes one or more vulnerable individuals then **all family members should act as if they, themselves, are at higher risk.** Learn how to [protect yourself and others](#).



Limit errands

Family members should leave only when absolutely necessary. [Essential errands](#) include going to the grocery store, pharmacy, or medical appointments that cannot be delayed (e.g., infants or individuals with serious health conditions in need of aid).

If you must leave the house, please do the following:

- Choose one or two family members who are not at a higher risk to run the essential errands.
- Wear a [mask](#), avoid crowds, practice social distancing, and follow these recommended [tips for running errands](#).
- If feasible, use forms of transportation that minimize close contact with others (e.g., biking, walking, driving or riding by car either alone or with household members).
- If necessary to use public transportation:
 - Maintain a 6-foot distance from other passengers as much as possible.
 - Avoid touching high-touch surfaces such as handrails, and wash hands or use hand sanitizers as soon as possible after leaving.
 - Follow CDC guidance on how to [protect yourself when using transportation](#).
 - Try to commute during less busy times.
 - [Clean your hands](#) as soon as possible after the trip.
- If necessary to ride in a car with members of different households:
 - Limit close contact and create space between others in the vehicle as possible.
 - Improve air flow in the car by opening the window or placing air conditioning on non-recirculation mode.
- Wash your hands immediately after you return home.
- Maintain as much physical distance as possible with those at higher risk in the home. For example, avoid hugging, kissing, or sharing food or drinks.



Vulnerable members should avoid caring for children and those who are sick

Those who are at increased risk for severe illness should avoid [caring for the children](#) in their household, if possible. If people at higher risk must care for the children in their household, **the children in their care should not have contact with individuals outside the household. Members of the household who are at high risk should also avoid taking care of sick people of any age who are sick.**



Separate a household member who is sick

Provide a separate bedroom and bathroom for the person who is sick, if possible. If you cannot provide a separate room and bathroom, try to separate them from other household members as much as possible. **Keep people at higher risk separated from anyone who is sick.**

- If possible, have only one person in the household [take care of the person who is sick](#). This caregiver should be someone who is not at higher risk for severe illness and should minimize contact with other people in the household.
 - Identify a different caregiver for other members of the household who require help with cleaning, bathing, or other daily tasks.
- If possible, maintain 6 feet between the person who is sick and other family or household members.
- If you need to share a bedroom with someone who is sick, make sure the room has good air flow.
 - Open the window and turn on a fan to bring in and circulate fresh air if possible.
 - Maintain at least 6 feet between beds if possible.
 - Sleep head to toe.
 - Put a curtain around or place other physical divider (e.g., shower curtain, room screen divider, large cardboard poster board, quilt, or large bedspread) to separate the ill person's bed.
- If you need to share a bathroom with someone who is sick, the person who is sick should clean and disinfect the frequently touched surfaces in the bathroom after each use. If this is not possible, the person who does the cleaning should:
 - Open outside doors and windows before entering and use ventilating fans to increase air circulation in the area.
 - Wait as long as possible before entering the room to clean and disinfect or to use the bathroom.
- If you are sick, do not help prepare food. Also, eat separately from the family.



Protect Your Health This Flu Season

It's likely that flu viruses and the virus that causes COVID-19 will both spread this fall and winter. Here is what you should know this season, including information on how to protect yourself and your family against flu by getting a flu vaccine.

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