

What New Yorkers Need to Know Now About COVID-19

How does COVID-19 spread?

- The virus is most likely to spread to people who are in close contact (within about 6 feet) with a person who has coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). It is spread through droplets that are sprayed when a person coughs or sneezes, and possibly when they sing or talk.
- COVID-19 can be spread if someone touches a surface that has the virus on it and then touches their eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- There is strong evidence that people who have no symptoms can spread the virus.

Who is at higher risk of getting COVID-19 or of having severe illness?

- People who are at most risk of severe illness are people age 50 and older (people age 65 and older are at greatest risk) and people who have other health conditions, including:
 - Lung disease or moderate to severe asthma
 - Heart disease or other serious heart conditions
 - Cancer
 - A weakened immune system
 - Obesity
 - Diabetes
 - Kidney disease
 - Liver disease
- People with regular close contact with someone who has COVID-19 are at higher risk of getting the virus, such as people who live in the same home, caretakers, and intimate partners.
- While there is currently no data to suggest pregnant people are more likely to get COVID-19, they should be monitored closely. Pregnant people can get very sick if infected by some viruses.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

- People with COVID-19 have reported a wide range of symptoms, ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms **may appear 2-14 days after exposure** to the virus.
- People with these symptoms may have COVID-19:
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - Fever
 - Chills
 - Muscle pain
 - Sore throat
 - New loss of taste or smell
- Other less common symptoms have been reported and include nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. Older adults may show confusion or disorientation and experience falls.
- Children have similar symptoms as adults and generally have mild illness. Recently, doctors identified a rare but serious condition in some children, called multisystem inflammatory systems in children (MIS-C), that is associated with COVID-19. For more information, visit nyc.gov/health/coronavirus and look for “Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children.”

I don't feel sick. How can I protect myself and others from COVID-19?

- **Stay home and practice physical distancing.** Even if you feel well and have no symptoms, stay home as much as possible. Work from home if you can and avoid nonessential interactions.
- Keep at least 6 feet from others.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or your arm when sneezing or coughing. Do not use your hands.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Do not shake hands.
- Monitor your health for fever, cough, difficulty breathing, sore throat, and other symptoms.
- Wear a face covering when outside your home if you cannot maintain at least 6 feet of distance from others, as required by a New York State Executive Order. A face covering is any well-secured paper or cloth such as a bandana or scarf that covers your nose and mouth. For more information about face coverings, visit nyc.gov/health/coronavirus and look for "FAQ About Face Coverings."

What kinds of COVID-19 testing are available?

- There are two types of tests:
 - **Virus tests:** swab or saliva tests used to identify whether someone **currently** has COVID-19 (i.e., whether they are currently sick).
 - **Antibody tests (or serology tests):** blood tests used to identify whether someone had COVID-19 in the **past**. Antibody tests cannot be used to tell if someone has a current infection with the virus that causes COVID-19, nor do they measure immunity to COVID-19.
- For more information about the types of testing, visit nyc.gov/health/coronavirus and look for "COVID-19 Testing: Frequently Asked Questions."

Who should get a virus test for COVID-19 to see if they are currently infected?

- The following people should receive a swab or saliva virus test for COVID-19:
 - Anyone **with symptoms**.
 - Anyone who had **close contact** within the previous 14 days to a person who was confirmed to have COVID-19, especially household contacts and intimate partners.
 - Anyone who **works in a group residential setting**, such as a nursing home, adult care facility, and homeless shelter.
- Call your provider if you have symptoms and think you may need to be tested. You can also visit nyc.gov/covidtest to find a community testing site near you or call **311**.

What should I do if I get sick with COVID-19 symptoms?

- **If you have mild to moderate symptoms, stay home.** Do not leave home except to get essential medical care (including testing for COVID-19) or to get basic needs such as groceries, if someone can't get them for you.
- Do not go to work, even if you are an essential worker.
- If you are 50 years of age or older, pregnant, or have health conditions that put you at increased risk for severe illness, call your doctor so they can monitor you more closely.
- If you have concerns about your health, or your symptoms do not go away after three to four days, consult with your health care provider.
- Use telephone or telemedicine instead of an in-person medical visit, if possible.

When should I call 911 or go to the hospital?

- You may be worried about going to a hospital or doctor's office. However, it is important that you get emergency medical care for COVID-19 and other health problems when needed.
- If you have any of the following symptoms, go to an emergency room or call **911** immediately:
 - Trouble breathing
 - Persistent pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
 - New confusion or inability to stay awake
 - Blue lips or face
 - Difficulty speaking
 - Sudden face drooping
 - Numbness in the face, arm, or leg
 - Seizure
 - Any sudden and severe pain
 - Uncontrolled bleeding
 - Severe or persistent vomiting or diarrhea
 - Any other emergency condition
- If your symptoms are serious, but not an emergency, call your health care provider right away. Many providers can help you over the phone or through telemedicine visits.

What should I do if I don't have a doctor?

- If you need a health care provider, NYC Health + Hospitals welcomes all New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status or ability to pay.
- Visit nychealthandhospitals.org for more information and to search for a doctor, or call 844-NYC-4NYC (844-692-4692) or **311**.

I have COVID-19 or symptoms of COVID-19. What can I do to protect others in my household?

- Stay at least 6 feet from everyone as much possible, and wear a face covering when you cannot.
- Use a separate bathroom if available. If you share a bathroom, disinfect frequently touched surfaces after each use.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when sneezing or coughing. Immediately throw out tissues and wash your hands afterward.
- Clean surfaces that are touched frequently, such as counters, doorknobs, remote controls, and phones after each use or at least once every day. Use a household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Do not share personal household items, such as glasses, cups, eating utensils and towels.
- If you share a bed, one person should sleep on the couch or sleep head to toe in the bed.
- Move seating and other furniture around to maintain physical distance.
- Do not have visitors come to your home.

I have COVID-19 or symptoms of COVID-19 but cannot separate from other household members, given the nature of my living space. What can I do?

- New York City has rented hotel rooms for people who have or may have COVID-19, or who live with someone who has COVID-19, and who cannot keep physical distance in their own homes.
- Authorized providers screen for eligibility and book an eligible person into a hotel. To find an authorized provider, visit nyc.gov/covidhotel.

What should I do if I'm sick and need to leave home for medical care or essential supplies?

- Wear a face covering and stay at least 6 feet from others.
- Wash your hands before going out and use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer while outside.
- Avoid other people as much as possible — walk if you can and do not enter crowded stores or transportation.

How long do I have to stay home if I have or may have COVID-19?

- If you have or may have COVID-19, you can leave your home when **all** the following are true:
 - It has been **at least 10 days** since your symptoms started;
 - You have not had a fever for the prior three days without use of fever-reducing drugs; **and**
 - Your overall illness has improved.
- If you tested positive for COVID-19 by a swab or saliva virus test but have never had symptoms, stay home for 10 days from the date you were tested.
- Your doctor may recommend a longer period of isolation due to underlying health conditions or based on the course of your illness. Also, some essential workers (such as nursing home staff) who had or may have COVID-19 must wait longer before returning to work based on New York State requirements.
- We still don't know if someone can get COVID-19 again so it's important to continue physical distancing, wear a face covering, and practice good hygiene when outside your home.

These are difficult times. How can I manage stress and anxiety?

- It is natural to feel overwhelmed, sad, anxious and afraid, or to experience other symptoms of distress, such as trouble sleeping. To lower your stress and manage the situation try to stay positive and remind yourself of your strengths.
- Stay connected with friends and loved ones via phone calls, social media, and video chat.
- If you are not sick, go outside and get exercise, but remember to wear a face covering, keep physical distance and wash your hands often.
- Visit the "App Library" at nyc.gov/nycwell for online tools to help you manage your health and emotional well-being.
- NYC Well, a free and confidential mental health support service, has trained counselors available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to provide brief counseling and referrals to care. Call 888-NYC-WELL (888-692-9355), text "WELL" to 65173, or visit nyc.gov/nycwell.
- New York State's COVID-19 Emotional Support Helpline has trained professionals to provide support and referrals. It is available 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. seven days a week at 844-863-9314.

For more information:

- Visit nyc.gov/health/coronavirus and cdc.gov/covid19.
- Text "COVID" to 692-692. Message and data rates may apply.

The NYC Health Department may change recommendations as the situation evolves.

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