

Stay Home, New Yorkers: What You Need to Know Now About COVID-19

There is widespread community transmission of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) happening in New York City. COVID-19 is a respiratory illness (which affects breathing) caused by a new coronavirus. Symptoms can range from mild, such as a sore throat, to severe, such as pneumonia. Most people will not need medical attention for their symptoms. Together we can slow the spread of the virus and protect those at higher risk of severe illness and our health care workers from getting sick.

Community transmission means that COVID-19 is circulating in NYC and that we should act as if we are all exposed. If you are sick, you must stay home. All New Yorkers must monitor their health carefully at this time. Only seek health care if you are very sick. We need to make sure people with severe illness will be able to stay in a hospital or intensive care unit if they need to. Even if you are not sick, stay home as much as you can: work from home, study from home, and avoid all unnecessary interactions and events.

How does COVID-19 spread?

- The virus is most likely to spread to people who are in close contact (within about 6 feet) with an infected person. The virus is in droplets that are sprayed when a person coughs or sneezes, and possibly when they talk. Staying 6 feet away helps protect you from that spray.
- Scientists disagree on how long COVID-19 lives on surfaces, but it can live on surfaces that people frequently touch. The virus can then be spread if someone touches their eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands that has virus on it.
- Scientists now believe that people who have no symptoms can spread the virus. However, people who are experiencing symptoms (for example, coughing or sore throat) are probably more likely to transmit the virus to others.

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 50 years of age or older and people who have other health conditions, including:
 - Lung disease
 - Moderate to severe asthma
 - Heart disease
 - A weakened immune system
 - Obesity
 - Diabetes
 - Kidney disease
 - Liver disease
 - Cancer
- While currently there is no data to suggest pregnant people are more likely to be infected by the virus that causes COVID-19, they should be monitored closely. Pregnant people can get very sick if infected by some viruses.
- People with regular close contact with someone who has or could have COVID-19 are also at higher risk of getting COVID-19, such as people who live in the same home, caretakers who work in the home or current sexual partners. For more information about sex and COVID-19,

visit nyc.gov/health/coronavirus and look for "Information on Safer Sex During Coronavirus."

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

- Most people with COVID-19 have mild to moderate symptoms and recover on their own without needing medical attention. Less commonly, COVID-19 may lead to pneumonia and other complications including hospitalization or death.
- Commonly reported symptoms include:
 - Fever (temperature of 100.4 degrees F or 38.0 degrees C or greater)
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath (trouble breathing)
 - Sore throat
- Some patients also report:
 - Loss of a sense of taste or smell
 - Feeling achy
 - Headache
 - Diarrhea
- If you have any of these symptoms, and they are not due to a preexisting health condition like asthma or emphysema, you may have COVID-19 and you must stay home.

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

- **Stay home.** Even if you feel well and have no symptoms, you must stay home as much as you can.
- 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 mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when sneezing or coughing. Do not use your hands.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Do not shake hands. Instead, wave.
- Monitor your health more closely than usual for fever, cough, difficulty breathing, sore throat, and other symptoms.
- Create more personal space between yourself and others, including by keeping at least 6 feet from others. This is called social distancing or physical distancing.

How do I practice physical distancing?

- Stay home as much as possible.
- Keep at least 6 feet between yourself and others.
- Do not gather in groups.
- Work from home.
- Avoid all nonessential travel and interactions.

Should I wear a face mask or other covering?

- In general, all New Yorkers should wear a face covering when they need to be outside their home and cannot maintain at least 6 feet of distance from others. A face covering is any well-secured paper or cloth (like a bandana or scarf) that covers your nose and mouth.
- People who are sick should wear a face covering while at home if they cannot maintain at least 6 feet of distance from others. People who are sick and who need to leave home, such as to get urgent medical care, should always wear a face covering.

- **Wearing a face covering does not make you invincible!** New Yorkers still need to stay home as much as possible, especially if sick. It is essential that people continue to practice physical distancing and good hand hygiene even when wearing a face covering — including keeping 6 feet of distance between themselves and others whenever possible. A face covering is one more precaution we can take that may help stop the spread of COVID-19.
- **Please do not hoard paper masks, especially medical grade masks,** such as N95 masks or surgical masks. These masks are in very short supply and our health care providers need these masks to stay healthy and to care for the most critically ill. Health care workers cannot keep distance from others, avoid sick people, or avoid contact with others' bodily fluid such as saliva, so it is essential that we reserve masks for them.
- For more information, visit nyc.gov/health/coronavirus and look for "FAQ About Face Coverings."

Who should get tested for COVID-19?

- Testing should generally only be done for people who are hospitalized for severe illness like pneumonia. Limiting testing protects health care workers and saves essential medical supplies like masks and gloves that are in short supply. It also protects you from becoming infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 if you are not already.
- At this point, if you have symptoms, assume that you have COVID-19. A positive test will not change what a doctor tells you to do to get better. The best course of action is to stay at home.

What should I do if I get sick with COVID-19 symptoms? Should I get tested or seek medical care?

- **Assume you have COVID-19!**
- **If you have mild to moderate symptoms, stay home.** By staying home, you reduce the possibility of transmission to others, including health care workers who are needed to care for patients who are severely ill. You can save the life of another New Yorker by staying home to ensure health care resources go to those who need them the most. Take care of others by staying home.
- **Do not leave your home except to get essential medical care or to get essential needs, such as getting groceries.** If possible, have someone get groceries and other essential items for you, while still practicing physical distancing. For example, groceries can be left on your doorstep. See below for precautions you should take if you have to leave home when sick.
- Do not go to school or to work, even if you are an essential worker as defined by New York State.
- If you are 50 years of age or older, pregnant, or have other health conditions — including lung disease, moderate to severe asthma, heart disease, a weakened immune system, obesity, diabetes, kidney disease liver disease, or cancer — consult your doctor. They may want to monitor you more closely.
- If your symptoms get worse or do not go away after three to four days, consult with your health care provider. Call, text or use your patient portal before visiting your provider. Use telemedicine instead of an in-person medical visit, if possible.
- If you develop any of the following symptoms, get medical attention immediately:
 - Trouble breathing
 - Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
 - New confusion or inability to stay awake
 - Bluish lips or face

This list is not all inclusive. If you have any concern about a medical emergency, consult your medical provider immediately or call **911**.

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

- Stay at least 6 feet from everyone in your home — distance is the best way to protect others.
- Wear a face covering while at home if you cannot maintain at least 6 feet of distance from others.
- 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. Do not use your hands to cover your sneeze or cough. Immediately throw out tissues and wash your hands afterward.
- Clean surfaces that are frequently touched, such as counters, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures and phones. Clean them 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.
- Do not have visitors come to your home.

What should I do if I'm sick and need to leave home?

- If you need to leave your home to see a doctor or to get medicine or groceries:
 - Make sure to keep a minimum of 6 feet from others — distance is the best way to protect others.
 - Wear a face covering to cover your mouth and nose.
 - Wash your hands before going out, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer while outside your home, and cover your nose and mouth with your arm or a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
 - Avoid other people as much as possible — walk if you can and do not enter crowded stores or transportation.

I was confirmed to have COVID-19 or I was sick and may have had COVID-19. How long do I have to stay home?

- If you had or may have had COVID-19, you can leave your home when **all** the following are true:
 - It has been **at least** seven days since your symptoms started.
 - You never had fever OR you have not had a fever for the prior three days without use of fever-reducing drugs such as Tylenol or ibuprofen.
 - Your overall illness has improved.
- Remember, even when you feel better, stay home as much as possible and only go out for essential supplies like groceries.

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 using technology (such as phone calls, social media, and video chat).
- If you are not sick, go outside and get exercise, but remember to practice good hygiene and physical distancing. Walking, running, and bicycling are good examples of activities that do not require close contact with others or shared equipment.

- Visit the “App Library” at nyc.gov/nycwell for online tools to help you manage your health and emotional wellbeing.
- If symptoms of stress become overwhelming, you can connect with trained counselors at NYC Well, a free and confidential mental health support service that can help New Yorkers cope. NYC Well staff are available 24/7 and can provide brief counseling and referrals to care in over 200 languages. For support, call 888-NYC-WELL (888-692-9355), text "WELL" to 65173 or chat online by visiting nyc.gov/nycwell.

For more information:

- For the latest information, visit nyc.gov/health/coronavirus and cdc.gov/covid19.
- For real-time updates, text “COVID” to 692-692. Message and data rates may apply.
- If you need a health care provider, NYC Health and Hospitals provides care to all New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status, insurance status or ability to pay. Call 844-NYC-4NYC (844-692-4692) or **311**.

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

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