

What New Yorkers Need to Know Now About COVID-19

This document provides basic information on COVID-19, including prevention, transmission, groups at increased risk, symptoms, testing, what to do if sick or exposed, and managing stress and anxiety.

For more information on COVID-19, visit nyc.gov/health/coronavirus. If you have any questions, call **311**.

COVID-19 Prevention and Transmission

How does COVID-19 spread?

COVID-19 most commonly spreads between people who are in close contact (within about 6 feet) with one another. It is spread through droplets that are sprayed when a person infected with the virus coughs, sneezes, talks, sings or breathes. Inhaling these particles into the nose, mouth, airways and lungs is the main way the virus spreads.

It may be possible for people to get COVID-19 by touching a surface that has the virus on it and then touching their mouth, nose, or eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

Under certain conditions, COVID-19 can remain in the air and travel distances beyond 6 feet. COVID-19 may then be spread when someone breathes in these particles. The risk of spreading COVID-19 in this way increases in indoor spaces with poor ventilation and during activities that increase respiration, such as singing or exercising.

How can I protect myself and others from COVID-19?

The following prevention measures are critical to stopping the spread of COVID-19:

- **Stay home.** Stay home if you are not feeling well or test positive for COVID-19, whether or not you are vaccinated.
- **Keep physical distance.** Keep at least 6 feet from others.
- **Wear a face covering.** Protect yourself and those around you by wearing a face covering when outside your home.
- **Keep your hands clean.** Wash your hands and carry alcohol-based hand sanitizer when outside your home. Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands and cover your coughs and sneezes.
- **Get vaccinated.** Vaccination is the best way to protect yourself and others.

Where can I get information about COVID-19 vaccination?

All people ages 12 and older who live, work, or study in New York State (NYS) are eligible for COVID-19 vaccination. COVID-19 vaccines are safe and getting vaccinated is the most important way to protect yourself from severe COVID-19 illness, hospitalization and death. For information on COVID-19 vaccines, visit nyc.gov/covidvaccine. Visit nyc.gov/vaccinefinder or call 877-VAX-4NYC (877-829-4692) to find a vaccination site. Many sites, including all City-run sites, do not require an appointment.

What is a face covering and how does it help prevent the spread of COVID-19?

A face covering is a well-secured cloth covering or disposable mask that covers your nose and mouth. Face coverings help prevent the spread of COVID-19 by:

- Protecting the wearer, by reducing their exposure to respiratory particles that may contain the virus.
- Protecting others, by reducing the amount of respiratory particles that enter the air when someone with COVID-19 coughs, sneezes, talks or breathes.

If you are not vaccinated against COVID-19, wear a face covering at all times when outside your home and around other people, and even sometimes at home. People who are fully vaccinated (two weeks after their single-dose vaccine or second dose of a two-dose vaccine) do not have to wear a face covering in many settings but must wear one sometimes.

For more information on face coverings, see [COVID-19 Face Coverings: Frequently Asked Questions](#) and [How to Put on a Face Covering](#) and [How to Wear Two Face Coverings](#).

People at Increased Risk of Severe COVID-19 Illness

Who is at increased risk of severe COVID-19 illness?

Severe illness means that the person with COVID-19 may require hospitalization, intensive care or a ventilator to help them breathe, or may even die. People who are at increased risk of severe illness need to be especially careful about monitoring their health and taking precautions.

Among adults, the risk of severe COVID-19 illness increases with age, with older adults at highest risk. For example, people in their 50s are at higher risk for severe illness than people in their 40s. People in their 60s or 70s are, in general, at higher risk for severe illness than people in their 50s.

Long-standing systemic health and social inequities have put people from some racial and ethnic groups (including Black, Latino and Indigenous groups) at increased risk of getting sick and dying from COVID-19. Studies have shown that people from some racial and ethnic groups are dying from COVID-19 at younger ages. People of color are often younger when they develop chronic medical conditions and may be more likely to have more than one condition.

In addition, people of any age with certain underlying health conditions are at increased risk for COVID-19 illness. This includes cancer, chronic kidney disease, chronic lung disease, heart conditions, obesity, pregnancy and diabetes. See [COVID-19 Prevention and Groups at Higher Risk](#) for a full list of conditions.

Can children be at increased risk of severe COVID-19 illness?

Severe COVID-19 illness in children is uncommon. There is currently limited evidence about which specific medical conditions can lead to increased risk for children. However, children with certain underlying conditions, such as asthma, cancer, diabetes and obesity, can be at increased risk of severe illness. See [COVID-19 Prevention and Groups at Higher Risk](#) for a full list of conditions.

I am older or have an underlying health condition, is it safe for me to go out?

Vaccination is the best way to prevent severe COVID-19 illness, hospitalization and death. The COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective, including in older adults and people with underlying medical conditions. If you are not fully vaccinated, consider extra precautions, such as:

- Avoid crowds and indoor gatherings.
- Consider wearing two masks (a cloth covering over a disposable mask) or using a higher-grade mask like a KN95 mask.

- Get your groceries and other necessities delivered, have someone get them for you or shop during off-peak hours.
- Exercise is important! Go outside to get fresh air but wear a face covering and practice physical distancing when you do.

If you have a condition or are taking medications that weaken your immune system, you may not be fully protected even if you are fully vaccinated. Talk to your health care provider before you stop taking precautions.

Where can I get more information on risk of severe COVID-19 illness?

For more information on people at increased risk of severe COVID-19 illness, including individual factors and living situations that may require extra precautions, visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) website](https://www.cdc.gov).

COVID-19 Symptoms

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

People with COVID-19 have reported a wide range of symptoms. Some people do not have any symptoms. Symptoms may include (among others):

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

Symptoms may appear two to 14 days after exposure to the virus. Most people with COVID-19 have mild to moderate symptoms and recover on their own. Less commonly, COVID-19 may lead to pneumonia, other severe complications, hospitalization or death.

Do children have the same symptoms of COVID-19?

Children have similar symptoms as adults and generally have mild illness. Doctors have identified a rare but serious condition in some children, called multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C), that is associated with COVID-19. For more information, see [MIS-C](#).

COVID-19 Testing

What kinds of COVID-19 tests are available?

There are two types of COVID-19 tests currently available:

- **Diagnostic tests** (also called **virus tests**), which are swab or saliva tests used to identify whether someone **currently** has COVID-19; and

- **Antibody tests** (also called **serology tests**), which are blood tests used to identify whether someone had COVID-19 in the **past**.

Who should get a diagnostic test for COVID-19?

People who are not vaccinated against COVID-19 should continue to get tested for COVID-19 whether or not they have symptoms. It is especially important to get tested if you:

- Have symptoms
- Had close contact with someone who was diagnosed with COVID-19 or had COVID-19 symptoms
- Recently attended a large indoor gathering
- Were recently traveling
- Are planning to attend a large event or visit someone at increased risk of severe COVID-19 illness

If you are unvaccinated, you should also consider periodic testing if you have frequent in-person interactions with others at work or socially — especially if you are in close contact with people without face coverings in indoor settings.

People who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and people who had COVID-19 in the past three months and recovered do not need to be tested, unless they have COVID-19 symptoms. There may be different testing requirements in certain settings, such as schools and group living facilities.

For more information on frequency of testing, see [NYC COVID-19 Testing Recommendations](#).

Where can I get tested?

If your provider does not offer COVID-19 testing, call **311**, text “COVID TEST” to 855-48 or visit nyc.gov/covidtest to find a testing site near you. Many sites offer testing at no cost to you.

For additional information on COVID-19 testing, see [COVID-19 Testing: Frequently Asked Questions](#).

What to Do If You Have or May Have COVID-19 (Isolation and Care)

What should I do if I have COVID-19 (positive diagnostic test) or symptoms of COVID-19?

If you test positive for COVID-19 or have symptoms of COVID-19, you should isolate. Isolation means staying home, monitoring your health and safely separating from others to prevent the spread of COVID-19. People with symptoms should **get tested for COVID-19**.

People with COVID-19 or symptoms of COVID-19 must **stay home**, even if they are fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Do not leave home except to get a COVID-19 test or other essential medical care, or for basic needs such as grocery shopping or picking up medications at your pharmacy if someone cannot get them for you. You should **call your health care provider**, especially if you are an older adult or have an underlying condition that puts you at increased risk of severe COVID-19 illness. Use telephone or telemedicine when possible.

What if I do not have a health care provider or health insurance?

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 health care provider, or call 844-NYC-4NYC (844-692-4692) or **311**.

Many low- to no-cost health insurance plans are available through the NYS of Health Marketplace. To make an appointment with a Certified Application Counselor, call **311**, text “CoveredNYC” to 877-877 or visit nyc.gov/health/healthcoverage.

Are there treatment options available for COVID-19?

There are treatment options for people with COVID-19, including monoclonal antibody (mAb) treatment. mAb treatment is for people at high risk for severe COVID-19 illness who have tested positive for COVID-19 and are not sick enough to be in the hospital. mAb treatment can lower the amount of virus in your body, reduce symptoms and help avoid hospitalization. It is most effective when received soon after COVID-19 symptoms begin, so it is important to get tested and care right away.

NYC Health + Hospitals offers mAb treatment at several of its outpatient facilities. Patients with a positive COVID-19 test can be screened for eligibility and scheduled for an appointment with NYC Health + Hospitals by connecting to ExpressCare.nyc and clicking “Talk to a Doctor Now,” or they can call 212-COVID19 (212-268-4319) and press 9 for monoclonal antibody treatments.

For more information, see [Monoclonal Antibody Treatment for COVID-19](#).

When should I go to the hospital or call 911?

It is important that you get emergency medical care for COVID-19 and other health problems when needed. Go to an emergency room or call **911** immediately if you have:

- 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

For how long do I have to stay home (isolate)?

If you have COVID-19 or COVID-19 symptoms you can leave your home when **all** the following are true:

- It has been **at least 10 days** since you started feeling sick, or since the date you were tested if you have not felt sick.
- You have not had a fever for at least 24 hours without taking of fever- and pain-reducing medicines, such as Advil, Motrin, Tylenol or aspirin.
- Your overall illness has improved.

What if my symptoms of COVID-19 continue?

You are considered no longer contagious after your isolation period ends, even if your symptoms continue. Most people who have COVID-19 completely recover, but some have lasting symptoms and health problems. Post-acute COVID-19 syndrome, also called long COVID or chronic COVID, refers to a wide range

of symptoms that develop during or after COVID-19 illness and continue for several weeks or months. Symptoms include fatigue, breathing problems and muscle pain. For more information on symptoms and available care options in NYC, see [Post-Acute COVID-19 Syndrome: Frequently Asked Questions](#).

For more information about isolation, see [COVID-19: Understanding Quarantine and Isolation](#). For more information about what to do when sick, see the Health Department's [Symptoms and Care webpage](#).

What to Do If Exposed to Someone With COVID-19 (Quarantine)

What should I do if I was exposed to someone with COVID-19?

People who are not fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and are exposed to someone with COVID-19 must quarantine. Quarantine means staying home, monitoring your health and safely separating from others after you were recently exposed to someone with COVID-19. You should quarantine if you have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 (within 6 feet for at least 10 minutes over a 24-hour period).

People who are fully vaccinated and people who have had COVID-19 in the past three months and recovered do not need to quarantine following an exposure. However, if they develop symptoms, they should seek COVID-19 testing and isolate at home.

Who must quarantine due to travel?

Quarantine is not required following domestic or international travel. For more information about travel quarantine, visit the [NYS Travel Advisory website](#).

What does it mean to quarantine?

People in quarantine must **stay home**. Do not leave home except to get a COVID-19 test or other essential medical care, or for basic needs such as grocery shopping or picking up medications at your pharmacy if someone cannot get them for you. You should also **get tested** for COVID-19. Remember it is possible to have COVID-19 and not have symptoms.

How do I figure out the date my quarantine ends?

If you are a close contact, you must quarantine for 10 days from your last close contact to the person who has COVID-19. Your employer may require you to stay out of work for a different period of time based on NYS requirements for specific industries.

For more information about quarantine, see [COVID-19: Understanding Quarantine and Isolation](#)

Protecting Others During Quarantine and Isolation

What can I do to protect others in my household during quarantine or isolation?

- **Create physical distance.** Stay at least 6 feet from others. Stay in a separate room, if possible. Sleep head-to-toe if you share a bed or have someone sleep on the couch. Move seating and other furniture around to maintain physical distance. Keep people who are sick separate from others, especially from people at increased risk for serious illness. Do not have visitors come to your home.
- **Cover up.** Wear a face covering at all times unless you are alone in a separate room; you should also wear a face covering when you are around pets. Other household members should also wear a face covering when they are in the same room as you.

- **Keep it clean.** Throw tissues into the garbage immediately after use. Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds, especially after you cough or sneeze. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if you are unable to wash your hands. Frequently clean surfaces you touch, such as counters, doorknobs, light switches, faucet handles, phones and remote controls, using household cleaning spray or wipes. Wash towels, blankets, sheets and clothes at the warmest possible setting with your usual detergent, and dry completely. Do not share glasses, cups, plates or utensils with others and wash them after every use. Do not share food.
- **Stay in a Take Care Hotel.** The NYC Test & Trace Corps will make sure that anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 and their close contacts will have the resources needed to safely separate in a hotel, free of charge, or at home to help prevent the spread of the virus. NYC Test & Trace Corps Contact Tracers can refer to the hotel program or anyone can call 212-COVID19 (212-268-4319) to book a room. For more information on Take Care Hotels, visit nychealthandhospitals.org/test-and-trace/take-care.

What should I do if I am in quarantine or isolation and need to leave home for medical care or essential supplies?

- Wear a face covering that snugly covers your nose and mouth and stay at least 6 feet apart from others.
- Wash your hands with soap and water before going out and use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer while outside the home.
- Avoid other people as much as possible — walk if you can and do not enter crowded stores or use public transportation.

Activities During COVID-19

Is it safe to get medical care?

You should continue to get medical care, such as vaccinations for you or your children, care for chronic conditions, routine testing and screenings, and well check exams. Health care providers are taking extra steps to keep you safe during the COVID-19 public health emergency. For more information, see [Get the Medical Care You Need](#).

Is it safe to meet up with others?

If you are fully vaccinated, you can gather with others without using face coverings or physical distancing. However, we recommend you continue wearing a face covering indoors until more people are vaccinated. If you are in a public place, such as a store or a restaurant, follow their face covering requirements.

If you are not fully vaccinated, you should avoid gatherings, especially if you are an older adult or have a health condition that increases your risk of severe COVID-19 illness. If you are going to meet up with others, meet up with people who are careful about using a face covering and keeping at least 6 feet from others. Keep your gathering small and short. The more people that gather close together and the longer the gathering, the greater the risk of COVID-19. Also, being outdoors is much safer. COVID-19 spreads easier indoors because there is less air circulation and the temperature and humidity may help spread the virus more easily. For more information, see [COVID-19: Tips on Getting Together Safely](#).

Is it safe to travel?

Some parts of the U.S. and many countries have high levels of COVID-19. Vaccination is the best way to protect yourself while traveling! Plan ahead so you can be fully vaccinated before you go: make sure you

leave enough time to get both vaccine doses (if getting the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine) and remember you are not considered fully vaccinated until two weeks after your second dose (or two weeks after your first dose of the single dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine).

Traveling may put you, your family and your community at risk of getting COVID-19 and spreading the virus to others, especially if you are not vaccinated. If you travel, plan ahead and take precautions during travel and at your destination. Make sure you check testing and quarantine requirements at your destination. Note that masks are required on airplanes and most public transportation, even if you are fully vaccinated.

If you are not fully vaccinated, consider getting tested and quarantining after travel. People who are fully vaccinated should also consider testing following international travel. Everyone should closely monitor for COVID-19 symptoms and isolate and get tested right away if they experience symptoms following travel. For more information, visit the [NYS Travel Advisory website](#) and the [CDC website](#).

Check out these additional activity-specific guidance documents:

- [Tips on Shopping Safely During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency](#)
- [How to Dine Out Safely During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency](#)
- [COVID-19: Tips on Getting Together Safely](#)
- [COVID-19: Tips on Staying Physically Active and Spending Time Outdoors](#)
- [How to Protest Safely During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency](#)
- [Commuting Safely During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency](#)
- [Safer Sex and COVID-19](#)

Managing Stress and Anxiety

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

During this ongoing period of uncertainty, it is natural to feel overwhelmed, sad, anxious or afraid, or to experience other symptoms of distress, such as trouble sleeping. Below are tips to help you cope.

- Stay connected with friends and loved ones by phone, social media and video chat. You can also meet at a park or other open space but remember to keep at least 6 feet from other and wear a face covering.
- Visit the “App Library” at nyc.gov/nycwell for online tools to help you manage your health and emotional well-being.
- NYC Well is your connection to free, confidential mental health support. Speak to a trained counselor 24/7 and get access to mental health and substance use services in more than 200 languages. For more information, call 888-NYC-WELL (888-692-9355), text "WELL" to 65173 or visit nyc.gov/nycwell.
- Call NY Project Hope emotional support helpline at 844-863-9314 to talk to specially trained volunteer professionals. They are there to listen, support and offer referrals from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., seven days a week.

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

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