

COVID-19: FAQ for Residential Buildings

This document provides answers for residential building owners and managers to frequently asked questions about COVID-19. For detailed information on Reopening NYC, see [Reopening New York City: Frequently Asked Questions](#), or visit nyc.gov/health/coronavirus and search for “Reopening NYC.”

Keep in mind these core four actions for preventing COVID-19 transmission:

- **Stay home if sick:** Stay home if you are sick or had contact with someone who was sick in the last 14 days, unless you are leaving for essential medical care (including testing) or other essential errands.
- **Keep physical distance:** Stay at least 6 feet away from other people.
- **Keep your hands clean and follow cleaning protocols:** Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after using the bathroom, blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing. Use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available. Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands. Cover your cough or sneeze with your sleeve, not your hands. Clean frequently touched surfaces regularly.
- **Wear a face covering:** Protect those around you. You can be contagious without symptoms and spread the disease when you cough, sneeze or talk. Properly wearing a face covering may help reduce the spread of COVID-19. For more information, visit nyc.gov/facecovering.

Stay Home if Sick

When can building staff who had suspected or test-confirmed COVID-19 return to work?

Based on New York State (NYS) Reopening guidance, most staff who have been out sick should not return to work until **all** the following are true:

- It has been at least 14 days since their symptoms started, **or** if no symptoms develop, 14 days after their first positive test.
- They have not had a fever for the past three days without the use of fever-reducing drugs, such as Tylenol or ibuprofen (such as Advil or Motrin).
- Their overall health has improved.

What if building staff are not reporting to work?

Building owners and property managers can consider finding backup staff or asking resident volunteers to help with tasks as appropriate, such as package delivery, and routine cleaning and disinfecting. Physical distancing must be encouraged at all times.

Is a worker who was out sick required to get a COVID-19 test before returning to work?

No, there is no testing requirement for returning to work. However, NYC recommends that all New Yorkers receive COVID-19 diagnostic testing whether or not they have symptoms or are at increased risk. Current recommendations do not state that people who previously tested positive should get retested, unless advised to do so by public health guidance or their health care provider.

Should building management notify public health officials if a worker tests positive for COVID-19?

NYS guidance requires employers to notify public health officials if they learn of an employee who is a confirmed or suspected case. If employers wish to report directly to public health authorities, they can email the NYC Test & Trace Corps at CovidEmployerReport@nychhc.org.

Please note the NYC Test & Trace program will only follow up on confirmed cases and will not reply to reports received through this email. NYC is performing contact tracing based on confirmed cases reported through a robust electronic laboratory reporting system.

Will the City notify building owners or residents if someone in the building is sick or tests positive for COVID-19?

No, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene will not notify reports of sickness or positive cases to building owners or residents. The NYC Test & Trace Corps will attempt to interview all people diagnosed with COVID-19 to identify close contacts who were potentially exposed. These close contacts will be directed to get tested and isolate based on their exposure.

If a person is concerned they may have been exposed to a case, but the person has not been contacted by the NYC Test & Trace Corps, the person can speak to their health care provider to discuss COVID-19 testing options or visit [testandtrace.nyc](https://testandtrace.nyc.gov).

Keep Physical Distance

Do building staff have to practice physical distancing at work?

Yes, building staff should practice physical distancing, keeping at least 6 feet away from others whenever possible. Face coverings should be worn when a distance of at least 6 feet cannot be maintained. To avoid crowding, limit the number of people in the elevator at the same time. People should consider only riding the elevator with their own party, taking the stairs or waiting for the next elevator.

Keep Your Hands Clean and Follow Cleaning Protocols

What can building owners, managers and maintenance staff do to promote healthy hand hygiene and help prevent the spread of COVID-19?

- Building staff should make sure that hand-washing sinks in common areas have clean running water, soap and paper towels at all times.
- Consider having hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol in common areas (for example, lobbies, bathrooms, laundry rooms, entrances and exits, and elevators) to encourage healthy hand hygiene among building occupants.
- Put up posters about hand-washing in bathrooms and other common areas as appropriate. Visit nyc.gov/health/coronavirus and look for “**Posters and Flyers,**” where you can find “Wash Your Hands Poster for Adults” available in multiple languages.

How often should building maintenance staff clean common spaces, like the lobby, restrooms or laundry rooms?

- Building maintenance staff should conduct regular cleaning and disinfecting at least every day.
 - Shared objects (such as tools) and high-touch surfaces (such as door handles, stairway railings, elevator buttons, light switches, reception desks, hopper doors, push and pull plates, mailboxes and equipment), in high-transit areas or shared spaces (such as restrooms, lobbies, elevators, laundry rooms and mailrooms) should be cleaned and disinfected more frequently.
- See [General Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfection for Non-Health Care Settings](https://nyc.gov/health/coronavirus) at nyc.gov/health/coronavirus for more information on how to clean and disinfect surfaces, and sanitize cleaning tools such as mops and cloths, as well as a sample cleaning log to support compliance with City and NYS requirements.
- Building staff should wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after cleaning. They should use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.

Wear a Face Covering

Are building staff required to wear face coverings at work?

Building staff must wear face coverings if they cannot maintain at least 6 feet of distance between themselves and others. Staff members should have a face covering ready to put on in case someone comes within 6 feet of them.

Does building management need to provide face coverings for building staff?

Building management needs to provide face coverings, at no cost, to the building staff. Building management should always maintain an adequate supply. Management could allow staff to bring and wear their own face coverings if they meet minimum standards.

What is considered an acceptable face covering?

Please see this [FAQ regarding face coverings](#).

If building staff are wearing face coverings, do they need to maintain 6 feet of distance between themselves and others?

The use of face coverings should not take the place of physical distancing. Building staff should stay at least 6 feet apart from others whenever possible. When physical distancing is not possible, staff must wear a face covering.

General Building Operations

Can the ventilation system transmit COVID-19? What steps can I take to protect building staff and others?

Current evidence is limited and does not suggest that air entering a ventilation system will transmit the virus. However, strong air movement across spaces from air conditioning units, supply air ducts or fans (personal or room fans) may move droplets beyond 6 feet. Take these steps to improve ventilation, as appropriate for your space:

- Increase the percentage of outdoor air, potentially as high as 100% (first confirm compatibility with heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system capabilities for both temperature and humidity control, as well as compatibility with outdoor and indoor air quality considerations).
- Increase total airflow supply to occupied spaces if possible.
- Disable demand-control ventilation (DCV) controls that reduce air supply based on temperature or occupancy.
- Consider using natural ventilation (for example, opening windows if possible and safe to do so) to increase air flow when weather conditions and building requirements allow.
- Improve central air filtration as much as possible (MERV 13 or 14) without significantly reducing design airflow.
- Inspect filter housing and racks to ensure appropriate filter fit and check for ways to minimize filter bypass.
- Consider running the ventilation system during unoccupied times to maximize dilution ventilation.
- Ensure exhaust fans in restroom facilities are functional and operating at full capacity when the workplace is occupied.

Can the COVID-19 virus spread through pools and hot tubs?

There is no evidence that COVID-19 can be spread to humans through pools and hot tubs. Proper operation, maintenance and disinfection (such as with chlorine and bromine) of pools and hot tubs should remove or inactivate the virus that causes COVID-19.

However, while there is ongoing community spread of COVID-19, residents should practice healthy hand hygiene and physical distancing. Building owners and operators should conduct routine cleaning of surfaces using appropriate cleaning and disinfection methods, paying special attention to frequently touched surfaces and objects (see [General Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfection for Non-Health Care Settings](#) at nyc.gov/health/coronavirus for recommendations).

Should building deliveries (such as food, basic supplies or medicine) be handled differently?

Building occupants (staff and residents) should maintain physical distancing when getting packages, mail, and entering or exiting the building. After handling mail, all building occupants should practice healthy hand hygiene. In a large residential building where packages are left in the lobby, building staff may consider helping residents by leaving deliveries outside their apartment door.

Some delivery services (for example, Uber Eats, FreshDirect and Amazon) also have an online section for “special instructions” where people can enter more information and request, for example, that packages be delivered to their door, or to text or call and leave the package(s) at the door in an effort to minimize person-to-person contact and touching of surfaces.

What should occupants do if there is a fire alarm in the building?

Building occupants should follow the building’s standard protocols if there is a fire alarm and fire safety should not be compromised. Fire and building codes should continue to be followed and fire doors should not be propped open. Encourage building occupants to maintain at least 6 feet distance from each other as they exit the building during such an incident.

What if repairs are needed in a specific unit (for example, plumbing or maintenance)?

Building occupants and workers should follow normal preventive actions, such as practicing healthy hand hygiene and maintaining physical distancing while the work is being done. Building occupants and workers should also consider wearing face coverings. Clean and disinfect work areas afterwards (see [General Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfection for Non-Health Care Settings](https://www.nyc.gov/health/coronavirus) at [nyc.gov/health/coronavirus](https://www.nyc.gov/health/coronavirus) for more information on how to clean and disinfect surfaces).

How else can residential building owners and property managers help residents stay healthy and reduce isolation during this time?

If building staff are able, consider checking in with residents by phone or text (not in person) who express interest in this type of contact.

For more information and support:

- For real-time updates, text "COVID" to 692-692. Message and data rates may apply.
- If you need a health care provider, NYC Health + 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**.
- To find a testing site, visit [nyc.gov/covidtest](https://www.nyc.gov/covidtest) or call **311**.

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

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