

# Prevent the spread of COVID-19 if you are sick

Accessible version: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>

If you are sick with COVID-19 or think you might have COVID-19, follow the steps below to help protect other people in your home and community.

## Stay home except to get medical care.

- **Stay home.** Most people with COVID-19 have mild illness and are able to recover at home without medical care. Do not leave your home, except to get medical care. Do not visit public areas.
- **Take care of yourself.** Get rest and stay hydrated.
- **Get medical care when needed.** Call your doctor before you go to their office for care. But, if you have trouble breathing or other concerning symptoms, call 911 for immediate help.
- **Avoid public transportation, ride-sharing, or taxis.**



## Separate yourself from other people and pets in your home.

- **As much as possible, stay in a specific room** and away from other people and pets in your home. Also, you should use a separate bathroom, if available. If you need to be around other people or animals in or outside of the home, wear a cloth face covering.
  - See COVID-19 and Animals if you have questions about pets: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#COVID19animals>



## Monitor your symptoms.

- **Common symptoms of COVID-19 include fever and cough.** Trouble breathing is a more serious symptom that means you should get medical attention.
- **Follow care instructions from your healthcare provider and local health department.** Your local health authorities will give instructions on checking your symptoms and reporting information.



If you develop **emergency warning signs** for COVID-19 get **medical attention immediately.**

Emergency warning signs include\*:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion or not able to be woken
- Bluish lips or face

\*This list is not all inclusive. Please consult your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning to you.

**Call 911 if you have a medical emergency.** If you have a medical emergency and need to call 911, notify the operator that you have or think you might have, COVID-19. If possible, put on a facemask before medical help arrives.

## Call ahead before visiting your doctor.

- **Call ahead.** Many medical visits for routine care are being postponed or done by phone or telemedicine.
- **If you have a medical appointment that cannot be postponed, call your doctor's office.** This will help the office protect themselves and other patients.



## If you are sick, wear a cloth covering over your nose and mouth.

- **You should wear a cloth face covering over your nose and mouth** if you must be around other people or animals, including pets (even at home).
- You don't need to wear the cloth face covering if you are alone. If you can't put on a cloth face covering (because of trouble breathing for example), cover your coughs and sneezes in some other way. Try to stay at least 6 feet away from other people. This will help protect the people around you.



**Note:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, medical grade facemasks are reserved for healthcare workers and some first responders. You may need to make a cloth face covering using a scarf or bandana.



[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

## Cover your coughs and sneezes.

- **Cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- **Throw used tissues** in a lined trash can.
- **Immediately wash your hands** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.



## Clean your hands often.

- **Wash your hands often** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. This is especially important after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.
- **Use hand sanitizer** if soap and water are not available. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry.
- **Soap and water are the best option**, especially if your hands are visibly dirty.
- **Avoid touching** your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.



## Avoid sharing personal household items.

- **Do not share** dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people in your home.
- **Wash these items thoroughly after using them** with soap and water or put them in the dishwasher.



## Clean all “high-touch” surfaces everyday.

- **Clean and disinfect** high-touch surfaces in your “sick room” and bathroom. Let someone else clean and disinfect surfaces in common areas, but not your bedroom and bathroom.
- **If a caregiver or other person needs to clean and disinfect** a sick person’s bedroom or bathroom, they should do so on an as-needed basis. The caregiver/other person should wear a mask and wait as long as possible after the sick person has used the bathroom.



High-touch surfaces include phones, remote controls, counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables.

- **Clean and disinfect areas that may have blood, stool, or body fluids on them.**

- **Use household cleaners and disinfectants.** Clean the area or item with soap and water or another detergent if it is dirty. Then use a household disinfectant.
  - Be sure to follow the instructions on the label to ensure safe and effective use of the product. Many products recommend keeping the surface wet for several minutes to ensure germs are killed. Many also recommend precautions such as wearing gloves and making sure you have good ventilation during use of the product.
  - Most EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective.

## How to discontinue home isolation

- People **with COVID-19 who have stayed home (home isolated)** can stop home isolation under the following conditions:
  - **If you will not have a test** to determine if you are still contagious, you can leave home after these three things have happened:
    - You have had no fever for at least 72 hours (that is three full days of no fever without the use of medicine that reduces fevers)

AND

  - other symptoms have improved (for example, when your cough or shortness of breath has improved)

AND

  - at least 7 days have passed since your symptoms first appeared.
- **If you will be tested** to determine if you are still contagious, you can leave home after these three things have happened:
  - You no longer have a fever (without the use of medicine that reduces fevers)

AND

- other symptoms have improved (for example, when your cough or shortness of breath has improved)

AND

- you received two negative tests in a row, 24 hours apart. Your doctor will follow CDC guidelines.



**In all cases, follow the guidance of your healthcare provider and local health department.** The decision to stop home isolation should be made in consultation with your healthcare provider and state and local health departments. Local decisions depend on local circumstances.

# Guidance for Large or Extended Families Living in the Same Household

Older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions are at higher risk for severe illness from coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). **If your household includes people in these groups, then all family members should act as if they, themselves, are at higher risk.** This can be difficult if space is limited for large or extended families living together. The following information may help you protect those who are most vulnerable in your household.

## This document explains how to:

- Protect the household when you leave for errands
- Protect household members at high risk for severe illness
- Protect children and others from getting sick
- Care for a household member who is sick
- Isolate a household member who is sick
- Eat meals together and feed a sick household member

## How to protect the household when you must leave the house

### Don't leave the household unless **absolutely necessary!**

For example, only leave if you must go to work, the grocery store, pharmacy, or medical appointments that cannot be delayed (such as for infants or for people with serious health conditions). Choose one or two family members who are not at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 to do the needed errands. **If you must leave the household, follow these nine tips:**



- 1. Avoid crowds, including social gatherings of any size.**
- 2. Keep at least 6 feet away from other people.**
- 3. Wash your hands often.**
- 4. Don't touch frequently touched surfaces in public areas, such as elevator buttons and handrails.**
- 5. Don't use public transportation, such as the train or bus, if possible. If you must use public transportation,**
  - » Maintain 6 feet of distance from other passengers as much as possible.
  - » Avoid touching frequently touched surfaces such as handrails.
  - » Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer as soon as possible after leaving public transportation.
- 6. Don't ride in a car with members of different households.**
- 7. Wear a cloth face covering to help slow the spread of COVID-19.**
  - » Cloth face coverings fashioned from household items or made at home from common materials at low cost can be used as an additional, voluntary public health measure. Information about the use of cloth face coverings is available at [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html).



## 8. Wash your hands immediately when you return home.

## 9. Maintain a physical distance between you and those at higher risk in your household.

For example, avoid hugging, kissing, or sharing food or drinks.

You can find more information about running essential errands at [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/essential-goods-services.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/essential-goods-services.html).

# How to protect members of the household who are at higher risk for severe illness

Adults 65 or older and people who have serious underlying medical conditions are at highest risk of severe illness from COVID-19. **If your household includes people in these groups, then all family members should act as if they, themselves, are at higher risk.**



**Here are seven ways to protect your household members.**

### 1. Stay home as much as possible.

### 2. Wash your hands often, especially after you have been in a public place or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. Information on when and how to wash hands can be found here: [www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html](https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html).



### 3. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if you can't wash with soap and water.

» Place a dime-sized amount in your palm and rub your hands together, covering all parts of your hand, fingers, and nails until they feel dry.

### 4. Don't touch your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

### 5. Cover your coughs and sneezes.

- » If you cough or sneeze, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or use the inside of your elbow.
- » Throw used tissues in the trash.
- » Immediately wash your hands.



### 6. Clean and then disinfect your home.

- » Wear disposable gloves, if available.
- » Clean frequently touched surfaces daily with soap and water or other detergents. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks.
- » Then, use an EPA-registered disinfectant that is appropriate for the surface. Follow the instructions on the label for safe and effective use of the cleaning product. Disinfectants are chemicals that kill germs on surfaces.



EPA-registered disinfectants are listed here: [www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2](https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2).

More about cleaning and disinfecting can be found here: [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cleaning-disinfection.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cleaning-disinfection.html)

### 7. Don't have visitors unless they need to be in your home.

You can find more information at [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html).



## How to protect children and others from getting sick

Adults 65 years and older and people who have serious medical conditions 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.

**Follow these five tips to help protect children and others from getting sick.**

- 8. Teach children the same things everyone should do to stay healthy.** Children and other people can spread the virus even if they don't show symptoms. Learn more at [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-covid-spreads.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-covid-spreads.html).
- 9. Don't let children have in-person playdates with children from other households.**
- 10. Teach children who are playing outside to stay 6 feet away from anyone who is not in their own household.**
- 11. Help children stay connected to their friends through video chats and phone calls.**
- 12. Teach children to wash their hands.** Explain that hand washing can keep them healthy and stop the virus from spreading to others.
  - » **Wet** your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
  - » **Lather** your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
  - » **Scrub** your hands for at least 20 seconds.
  - » **Rinse** your hands well under clean, running water.
  - » **Dry** your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.



You can find more information about caring for children at [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/children.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/children.html).

## How to care for a household member who is sick

Most people who get sick with COVID-19 will have only mild illness and should stay at home to recover. Care at home can help stop the spread of COVID-19 and help protect people who are at risk for getting seriously ill from COVID-19.

**If you are caring for someone who is sick at home, follow these six tips:**

- 1. Have the person stay in one room, away from other people, including yourself, as much as possible.**
- 2. Have them use a separate bathroom, if possible.**
- 3. Monitor them for emergency warning signs and get medical attention immediately if they have any of the following:**
  - » Trouble breathing
  - » Continuing pain or pressure in the chest
  - » New confusion or if they are unable to wake up
  - » Bluish lips or face
  - » Any other symptoms that are severe or concerning



#### 4. Make sure the person with COVID-19 does the following:

- » Drinks a lot of fluids to stay hydrated
- » Rests at home
- » Uses over-the-counter medicines to help with symptoms (after talking to their doctor)

For most people, symptoms last a few days and they get better after a week.

#### 5. Have their doctor's phone number on hand, and call their doctor if the person with COVID-19 gets sicker.

If English is your second language, a household member should know how to ask for an interpreter.

#### 6. Call 911 for medical emergencies.

Tell the 911 operator that the patient has or is suspected to have COVID-19.

If English is your second language, a household member should know how to ask for an interpreter.



You can find more information about caring for someone who is sick at [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/care-for-someone.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/care-for-someone.html).

## How to isolate a sick household member when household space is limited

If you cannot provide a separate room and bathroom for a person who is sick with COVID-19, try to separate them from other household members. Try to create adequate separation within your household to protect everyone, especially those people at higher risk (those over 65 years and those who have medical conditions).

### Follow these ten tips when isolating a household member who is sick:

1. Keep 6 feet between the person who is sick and other household members.
2. Cover coughs and sneezes; wash hands often; and don't touch your eyes, nose, and mouth.
3. Have the sick household member wear a cloth face covering when they are around other people at home and out (including before they enter a doctor's office).

The cloth face covering can be a scarf or bandana. But they should not be placed on children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or anyone who is not able to remove the covering without help. You can find more about cloth face coverings at [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html).

4. Keep people at higher risk separated from anyone who is sick.
5. 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.

- » The caregiver should clean where the sick person has been, as well as their bedding and laundry.
- » The caregiver should minimize contact with other people in the household, especially those who are at higher risk for severe illness.
- » Have a caregiver for the person who is sick and a different caregiver for other members of the household who require help with cleaning, bathing, or other daily tasks.



6. Clean and disinfect surfaces, doorknobs, and other commonly touched surfaces with EPA-registered disinfectants daily. Find a list here: [www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2](https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2).

7. **Limit visitors to those with an essential need to be in the home.**
8. **Don't share personal items like phones, dishes, bedding, or toys.**
9. **Try to do the following if you need to share a bedroom with someone who is sick:**
  - » Make sure the room has good air flow. Open a window and turn on a fan to bring in fresh air.
  - » Place beds at least 6 feet apart, if possible.
  - » Sleep head to toe.
  - » Put a curtain around or place another physical divider to separate the bed of the person who is sick from other beds. For example, you might use a shower curtain, room screen divider, large cardboard poster board, quilt, or large bedspread.
10. **Have the person who is sick clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces in a shared bathroom.**



If this is not possible, others who share the bathroom should wait as long as possible after the sick person uses the bathroom before entering it to clean and disinfect or to use the bathroom. Make sure the room has good air flow. Open a window and turn on a fan (if possible) to bring in and circulate fresh air.

## How to eat meals together and feed a household member who is sick

If possible, make a plate for the sick household member to eat in the separate area they are staying in. If they cannot eat in the separate area they are staying in, they should stay at least 6 feet away from other members of the household during meals. Or, they should eat at a different time than others in the household.

**Also, follow these seven tips:**

1. **Don't help prepare food if you are sick.**
2. **Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water before eating.**  
This includes everyone in the household!
3. **Use clean utensils when placing food on every household member's plate.**
4. **Don't eat from the same dishes or use the same utensils as someone else in the household.**
5. **Wear gloves to handle dishes, drinking glasses, and utensils (food service items), if possible.** Also, wash these non-disposable items with hot water and soap or in a dishwasher after you use them.
6. **Have only one person bring food to the sick person and clean-up the sick person's food service items.** This should be someone who is not at higher risk for severe illness.
7. **Wash your hands after handling used food service items.**

