HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Older adults and people who have severe underlying medical conditions like heart or lung disease or diabetes seem to be at higher risk for developing more serious complications from COVID-19 illness.

Know How it Spreads

There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
- These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

Take steps to protect yourself

- Clean your hands often
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

Avoid close contact.
Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

Put distance between yourself and other people if COVID-19 is spreading in your community. This is especially important for people who are at higher risk of getting very sick.

Take steps to protect others

Stay home if you are sick, except to get medical care.

Learn what to do if you are sick.

Cover coughs and sneezes
Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow.
Throw used tissues in the trash.

Immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, clean your hands with a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

Wear a facemask if you are sick AND when you are around other people (e.g., sharing a room or vehicle) and before you enter a healthcare provider’s place. If you are not able to wear a facemask, then you should do your best to cover your coughs and sneezes.

People who are caring for you should wear a facemask if they enter your room. Learn what to do if you are sick.

If you are NOT sick, you do not need to wear a facemask unless you are caring for someone who is sick (and they are not able to wear a facemask).

Clean and disinfect

- Clean AND disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks.
- If surfaces are dirty, clean them: Use detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection

To Disinfect:

Most common EPA-registered household disinfectants will work. Use disinfectants appropriate for the surface.

Options include:

1. Diluting your household bleach. To make a bleach solution, mix:

   5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) bleach per gallon of water OR 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water

   - Alcohol solutions. Ensure solution has at least 70% alcohol.

   **IMPORTANT REMINDERS FOR CLEANING & DISINFECTANT PRODUCTS**

   - Follow manufacturer’s instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (application, proper ventilation, concentration, application method and contact time, etc.)
   - Check to ensure the product is not past its expiration date.
   - **Never** mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser. Unexpired household bleach will be effective against coronaviruses when properly diluted.
DETAILED DISINFECTION GUIDANCE

As part of your everyday prevention actions clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects.

1. Clean

☐ Wear disposable gloves to clean and disinfect.
☐ Clean surfaces using soap and water.
☐ Practice routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces: tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, sinks, etc.

2. Disinfect

☐ Clean the area or item with soap and water or another detergent if it is dirty.
☐ AFTER cleaning, use a household disinfectant:
   Recommendation: Use EPA-registered household disinfectant. Follow the instructions on the label to ensure safe and effective use of the product.
☐ Keep surface wet for a period of time as products recommend (see product label).
☐ Use precautions such as wearing gloves and making sure you have good ventilation during use of the product.
☐ Diluted household bleach solutions may also be used if appropriate for the surface. To make a bleach solution, mix: 5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) bleach per gallon of water OR 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water.
☐ Check to ensure the product is not past its expiration date. Unexpired household bleach will be effective against coronaviruses when properly diluted.
☐ Follow manufacturer’s instructions for application and proper ventilation.
☐ Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser.
☐ Leave solution on the surface for at least 1 minute.
Soft Surfaces

For soft surfaces such as carpeted "door" rugs, and drapes:

- Clean the surface using soap and water or with cleaners appropriate for use on these surfaces.
- Launder items (if possible) according to the manufacturer’s instructions.
- Use the warmest appropriate water setting.
- Disinfect with an EPA-registered household disinfectant and dry items completely.

Electronics

For electronics, such as tablets, touch screens, keyboards, and remote controls:

- Consider putting a wipeable cover on electronics.
- Follow manufacturer’s instruction for cleaning and disinfecting.
- If no guidance, use alcohol-based wipes or sprays containing at least 70% alcohol.
- Dry surface thoroughly.

Laundry

For clothing, towels, linens and other items:

- Wear disposable gloves.
- Wash hands with soap and water as soon as you remove the gloves.
- Do NOT shake dirty laundry.
- Launder items according to the manufacturer’s instructions.
- Use the warmest appropriate water setting and dry items completely.
- Dirty laundry from an ill person can be washed with other people’s items.
- Clean and disinfect clothes hampers according to guidance above for surfaces.

WHEN SOMEONE IS SICK

Clean hands often: Always wash immediately after removing gloves and after contact with an ill person.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds
- Hand sanitizer: If soap and water are not readily available and hands are not visibly dirty, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- IF hands are visibly dirty, always wash hands with soap and water.

Key times to clean hands:

- After blowing one’s nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After using the restroom
- Before eating or preparing food
- After contact with animals or pets
- Before and after providing routine care for another person who needs assistance (e.g. a child)

Bedroom and Bathroom

- Keep separate bedroom and bathroom for sick person.
- The sick person should stay separated from other people in the home.
- If you have a separate bedroom and bathroom: Reduce cleaning to as-needed (e.g. soiled items and surfaces) to minimize the amount of contact with the sick person.
- Caregivers can provide personal cleaning supplies to the sick person (if appropriate). Supplies include: tissues, paper towels, cleaners, and EPA-registered disinfectants.
- If shared bathroom: Clean and disinfect after each use by the sick person. If this is not possible, the caregiver should wait as long as possible before cleaning and disinfecting

Trash

- Dedicate a lined trash can for the ill person. Use gloves when removing garbage bags, and handling and disposing of trash. Wash hands afterwards.

CARING FOR SOMEONE WHO IS SICK

Most people who get sick with COVID-19 will have only mild illness and should recover at home.* 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.

**COVID-19 spreads between people who are in close contact (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.**

If you are caring for someone at home:

- monitor for emergency signs,
- prevent the spread of germs,
- treat symptoms, and
- carefully consider when to end home isolation.

*IMPORTANT NOTE: Older adults and people of any age with certain serious underlying medical conditions like lung disease, heart disease, or diabetes are at higher risk for developing more serious complications from COVID-19 illness and should seek care as soon as symptoms start.

Monitor the person for worsening symptoms.

Know the emergency warning signs.

- Have their healthcare provider’s contact information on hand.
- If they are getting sicker, call their healthcare provider. For medical emergencies, call 911 and notify the dispatch personnel that they have or are suspected to have COVID-19.
- 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 inability to arouse
- Bluish lips or face

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Prevent the spread of germs when caring for someone who is sick:

- Have the person stay in one room, away from other people, including yourself, as much as possible.
- If possible, have them use a separate bathroom.
- Avoid sharing personal household items, like dishes, towels, and bedding.
- If facemasks are available, have them wear a facemask when they are around people, including you.
- If the sick person can’t wear a facemask, you should wear one while in the same room with them, if facemasks are available.
- If the sick person needs to be around others (within the home, in a vehicle, or doctor’s office), they should wear a facemask.
- Avoid having any unnecessary visitors.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after interacting with the sick person. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Everyday, clean all surfaces that are touched often, like counters, tabletops, and doorknobs. Use household cleaning sprays or wipes according to the label instructions.
- Wash laundry thoroughly.
- If laundry is soiled, wear disposable gloves and keep the soiled items away from your body while laundering. Wash your hands immediately after removing gloves.

For any additional questions about their care, contact their healthcare provider or state or local health department.

Provide symptom treatment

- Make sure the sick person drinks a lot of fluids to stay hydrated and rests at home.
- Over-the-counter medicines may help with symptoms.
- For most people, symptoms last a few days and get better after a week.
When to end home isolation (staying home)

People with COVID-19 who have stayed home (are home isolated) can stop home isolation under the following conditions:

- If they will **not have a test** to determine if they are still contagious, they can leave home after these three things have happened:
  - They have had no fever for at least 72 hours (that is three full days of no fever without the use medicine that reduces fevers)
  - Other symptoms have improved (for example, when their cough or shortness of breath have improved)
  - At least 7 days have passed since their symptoms first appeared

- If they will **have to test** to determine if they are still contagious, they can leave home after these three things have happened:
  - They have had no fever (without the use of medicine that reduces fever)
  - Other symptoms have improved (for example, when your cough or shortness of breath have improved)
  - They have received two negative tests in a row, 24 hours apart. Their doctor will follow CDC guidelines.

Source: CDC--Page last reviewed: March 18, 2020