

Prevent COVID-19 spread at home: Tips for people with symptoms or caring for those who are sick

If you are sick with COVID-19, or have symptoms similar to the disease, it is important to take precautions to avoid spreading the illness with others in your community or home. These tips will help provide guidance for patients, caregivers, and family members dealing with COVID-19 at home.

Information comes from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) information about COVID-19 in [home care settings](#). Please check the CDC's website for the latest information and listen to any recommendations from your health care provider.

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is the name of the respiratory illness caused by the 2019 coronavirus. The symptoms are fever, cough and shortness of breath. Anyone who is sick, or may be sick, with COVID-19 should call their health care provider first before going to the clinic or hospital.

How does COVID-19 spread?

Like the flu, it spreads from person-to-person. This can happen by:

- Being in close contact with a sick person (within about 6 feet).
- Being close to people carrying the virus. Some people carrying the virus don't even know they are sick and may not have any symptoms, but they can still spread the virus from person-to-person.
- Breathing in the droplets in the air when a sick person sneezes, coughs, or talks (or allowing these droplets to touch your mouth or nose).
- Touching a surface that has the virus on it and then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.

Tips for everyone

- Stay home if you are sick, even with mild symptoms. If you must leave the house while sick, wear a cloth face covering for your nose and mouth.
- Wash your hands often with soap and clean water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water is not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Clean your hands after sneezing or coughing, going to the bathroom, and before eating food.
- When coughing and sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with your elbow or a tissue.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth as this is how the virus gets into your body.
- Clean all frequently-touched surfaces, such as counters, phones, toilets, and doorknobs daily.

If [you are the person sick](#) with COVID-19:

- Stay at home except when getting medical treatment. Call ahead to the clinic or hospital.
- Do not go to work, school, or public areas.
- If possible, stay in one bedroom and use a separate bathroom from the rest of the household. Isolating yourself from the rest of your family will help protect others from getting sick.
- Do not prepare or touch anybody else's food.
- When coughing and sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with your elbow or a tissue.
- If they are available, wear a face mask when you are around other people. If you are unable to wear a facemask, cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze, stay 6 feet away from people, keep your hands clean, and try not to touch things that others might use.
 - A homemade mask (bandana, scarf) can be used in the absence of a face mask.
- Call for medical attention if your symptoms get worse. Make sure to tell the responders that you have, or think you have, COVID-19.
- Continue with home isolation until your health care provider tells you it's okay to stop.

If [you are the caregiver](#) for the person sick with COVID-19:

- You should not be the caregiver if you are over 65, pregnant, a child, or have preexisting health conditions such as: heart disease, diabetes or lung disease.

- Don't share items like plates, utensils, towels, or bedding. After being used, these items should all be cleaned thoroughly.
- Clean all frequently-touched surfaces, such as counters, phones, toilets and doorknobs daily. This is a two-step process:
 - If a surface is visibly dirty, it should first be cleaned off with soap and water.
 - The surface should then be disinfected with a household disinfectant or a bleach solution. To make a bleach solution, mix 5 tablespoons (1/3 cup) bleach with 1 gallon of water or 4 teaspoons bleach with 1 quart of water. Always follow the products instructions and never mix bleach with ammonia or any other cleaner. Allow surface to air dry to achieve disinfection.
- Wear a facemask when entering the isolation room to care for the sick person. Wear gloves when touching any fluids, emptying a wastebasket full of tissues, cleaning any surfaces, or doing any laundry that may carry the virus.
 - If you do not have a facemask, try to spend as little time as possible in the room with the sick person and stay at least 6 feet away from them. A homemade mask (bandana, scarf) can be used in the absence of a face mask.
 - If the sick person is well enough to clean and disinfect the room and bathroom they are isolated to, they should. Otherwise the caregiver should wear appropriate protective equipment and limit the amount of time they spend in these rooms as much as possible.
- Remove gloves and mask without touching the contaminated parts and wash your hands. Store reusable gloves in a place where others will not be able to access them and do not use them for any other purpose.
- Clean infected laundry in the washer and dryer on the highest heat recommended on the label.
- Call for medical attention if their symptoms get worse. If they have a medical emergency, make sure to tell the responders that they have, or think they have, COVID-19.
- If someone in your household has tested positive for COVID-19, keep the entire household at home. You may have also been exposed but do not know it yet. Contact your health care provider for advice.

If you live in the house with the person sick with COVID-19:

- Avoid interacting with the sick person or entering the isolation room as much as possible, especially if you are over 65, pregnant, a child, or have preexisting health conditions such as: heart disease, diabetes or lung disease.
- Wash your hands often with soap and clean water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water is not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Clean your hands after interacting with the sick person, touching things the sick person used, going to the bathroom, and before eating or preparing food.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth as this is how the virus gets into your body.
- Don't invite unnecessary people into the house; especially Elders.
- Keep the house well ventilated by opening windows when possible and using bathroom/range exhaust fans.
- If possible, use a different bathroom. If you need to share a bathroom, it should be disinfected before use. Do not sleep in the same room as sick people. Don't share items like plates, utensils, towels or bedding.
- Keep dogs and other pets away from the sick people.
- If someone in your household has tested positive for COVID-19, keep the entire household at home. You may have also been exposed but do not know it yet. Contact your health care provider for advice.
- If you have to go out in public, you should wear a face cover even if you don't feel sick. This will help protect other people if you are sick but don't know it. You can [make a face cover at home](#).