



COVID-19

How to Protect Yourself and Others

Updated Jan. 26, 2023

As of January 26, 2023, EVUSHELD™ is not currently authorized for emergency use because it is unlikely to be active against the majority of SARS-CoV-2 variants circulating in the United States.

COVID-19 Prevention Actions

There are many ways your actions can help protect you, your household, and your community from severe illness from COVID-19. [CDC's COVID-19 Community Levels](#) provide information about the amount of severe illness in the community where you are located to help you decide when to take action to protect yourself and others.



COVID-19 County Check

Find community levels and prevention steps by county. Data updated weekly.

Select a Location (all fields required)

State



County



Go

Prevention Actions to Use at All COVID-19 Community Levels

In addition to basic health and hygiene practices, like [handwashing](#), CDC recommends some prevention actions at all COVID-19 Community Levels, which include:

- [Staying Up to Date with COVID-19 Vaccines](#)
- [Improving Ventilation](#)
- [Getting Tested for COVID-19 If Needed](#)
- [Following Recommendations for What to Do If You Have Been Exposed](#)
- [Staying Home If You Have Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19](#)
- [Seeking Treatment If You Have COVID-19 and Are at High Risk of Getting Very Sick](#)
- [Avoiding Contact with People Who Have Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19](#)

Build Your Personal COVID-19 Plan

COVID-19 Plan

Tools, information, and action steps to share with your family, friends, and healthcare provider

Start your personal COVID-19 plan

Talk with your healthcare provider about whether you are at high risk of getting very sick from COVID-19.

- People who are more likely to get very sick include older adults (age 50 years or more), with risk increasing with age, people who are unvaccinated, and people with certain medical conditions, such as chronic lung disease, heart disease, or a weakened immune system.

Understanding risk

- People with risk factors for severe disease may benefit from treatment if they get COVID-19. A healthcare provider will help decide which treatment, if any, is right for you.

Tests

Have a supply of COVID-19 self-test kits at home and know when and how to use them.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-science/getting-self-testing.html>

- If you have symptoms of COVID-19, test immediately.
- If you test positive, treatments are available that can reduce your chances of hospitalization and death.

Treatment

Have a plan to contact a healthcare provider right away if you test positive.

Don't delay: Treatment should be started within days after you first develop symptoms to be effective.

Healthcare provider

If you don't have a healthcare provider, consider telehealth options or contact a Test to Treat site to get tested, evaluated, and treated in one location.

- Test to Treat locations: <https://covid-19-test-to-treat-locator-hhs.hhs.gov/arcsp/>



The illustration shows three red and white COVID-19 self-test kits in the foreground. In the background, there is a stylized representation of a healthcare provider's office, including a desk with a computer monitor displaying a prescription (Rx) and a green box, and a chair.

Take precautions

COVID-19 in Your Community: Keep track of your COVID-19 Community Level and use it to guide your precautions:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-science/your-health/community-level.html>

Vaccines

Stay up to date on vaccines. Know when to get a booster:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-science/vaccines/Stay-up-to-date.html>

Ventilation

Spend time outside and improve indoor air quality at home by opening windows and using adequate filtration.

Masks

Masks are recommended for those at high risk when COVID-19 community levels are medium and for everyone when levels are high. Learn more:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-science/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>



The illustration shows a white box of 'MASKS' with a blue and white striped pattern. A white surgical mask is shown in front of the box.



The illustration shows a person wearing a white surgical mask, with the CDC logo visible in the bottom right corner.

Put together your COVID-19 plan so you have all the information you need on hand if you get sick with COVID-19. Download, edit and save, and share your plan with your family, friends, and healthcare provider.

File Details: 561 KB, 3 pages

[View PDF in English](#) [View PDF in Spanish](#) 

Staying Up to Date with COVID-19 Vaccines

COVID-19 vaccines help your body develop protection from the virus that causes COVID-19. Although vaccinated people sometimes get infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, [staying up to date](#) on COVID-19 vaccines significantly lowers the risk of getting very sick, being hospitalized, or dying from COVID-19. CDC recommends that everyone who [uses](#) [healthcare systems](#).



To find COVID-19 vaccine locations near you: Search [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov), text your ZIP code to 438829, or call 1-800-232-0233.

Improving Ventilation and Spending Time Outdoors

Improving ventilation (moving air into, out of, or within a room) and filtration (trapping particles on a filter to remove them from the air) can help prevent virus particles from accumulating in indoor air. Improving ventilation and filtration can help protect you from getting infected with and spreading the virus that causes COVID-19. Spending time outside when possible instead of inside can also help: Viral particles spread between people more readily **indoors than outdoors**.

Actions that can improve ventilation and filtration include:

- Bringing in as much outdoor air as possible—for example, opening windows.
- Increasing air filtration in your heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system, such as by changing filters frequently and using filters that are properly fitted and provide higher filtration.



- Using portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) cleaners.
- Turning on exhaust fans and using other fans to improve air flow.
- Turning your thermostat to the “ON” position instead of “AUTO” to ensure your HVAC system provides [continuous airflow and filtration](#).

CDC’s interactive ventilation tools can help you see how much you can improve ventilation in your [home](#) or [school](#).

Moving indoor activities outdoors

You are less likely to be infected with COVID-19 during outdoor activities because virus particles do not build up in the air outdoors as much as they do indoors. As the COVID-19 Community Level rises, consider increasing the number of group activities you move outside.

[Financial support](#) [🔗](#) may be available to certain entities, like schools, to make ventilation improvements.

Getting Tested for COVID-19 If Needed

[Get tested](#) if you have [COVID-19 symptoms](#). A viral test tells you if you are infected with the virus that causes COVID-19. There are two types of viral tests: rapid tests and laboratory tests. These tests might use samples from your nose or throat, or saliva. Knowing if you are infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 allows you to take care of yourself and take actions to reduce the chance that you will infect others.

You can also access tests the following ways:

- Order free self-tests at [COVIDtests.gov](#) [🔗](#) . Free tests are also available through [local health departments](#).
- If you have Medicare Part B, including those enrolled in a Medicare Advantage plan, Medicare will cover up to 8 free self-tests each calendar month from participating pharmacies and providers. Private health insurance may also reimburse the cost of purchasing self-tests. Visit [FDA’s website](#) [🔗](#) for a list of authorized tests.
- Call your healthcare provider, visit a [community testing site](#) [🔗](#) , or call your local health department for more options.



Need additional help with COVID-19 testing? [WhenToTest.org](https://www.whentotest.org/) is an online, mobile-friendly tool that helps you make decisions about COVID-19 testing.

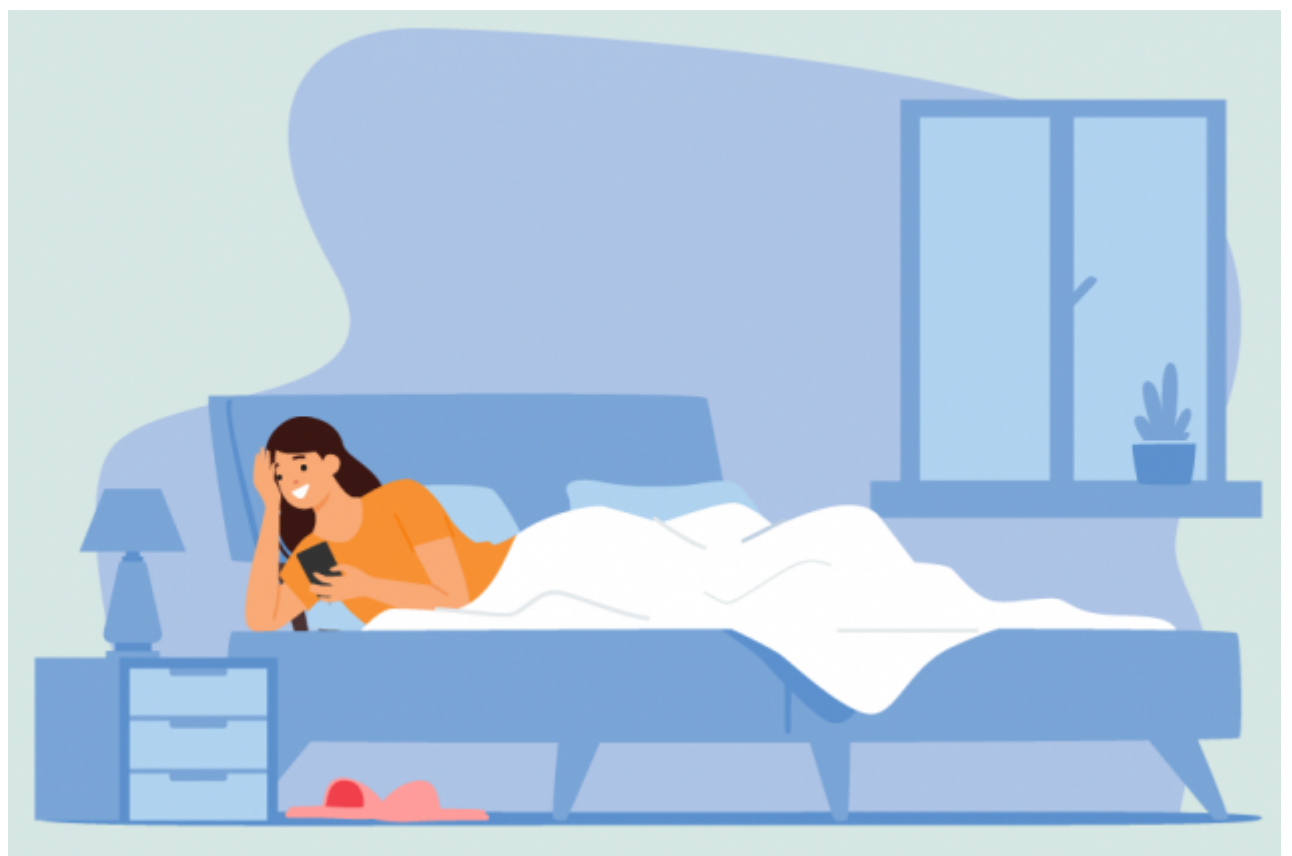
Following Recommendations for What to Do If You Have Been Exposed

If you were exposed to someone with COVID-19, you may have been infected with the virus. Follow CDC's recommendations for [what to do if you were exposed](#). This includes wearing a high-quality mask when indoors around others (including inside your home) for 10 days, testing, and monitoring yourself for symptoms.



Staying Home When You Have Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19

If you have COVID-19, you can spread it to others, even if you do not have symptoms. If you have symptoms, get tested and stay home until you have your results. If you have tested positive (even without symptoms), follow CDC's [isolation recommendations](#). These recommendations include staying home and away from others for at least 5 days (possibly more, depending on how the virus affects you) and wearing a high-quality mask when indoors around others for a period of time.



Seeking Treatment If You Have COVID-19 and Are at High Risk of Getting Very Sick

Effective treatments are now widely available and free, and you may be eligible.

- Contact your healthcare provider, [health department](#), or [Community Health Center](#) [↗](#) to learn about [treatment options](#).
- Don't delay! Treatment must be started within a few days after you first develop symptoms to be effective.
- If you don't have timely access to a healthcare provider, check if a [Test to Treat location](#) [↗](#) is in your community. You can get tested, receive a prescription from a healthcare provider (either onsite or by telehealth), and have it filled all at one location.



Avoiding Contact with People Who Have Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19

Avoiding contact with people who have COVID-19, whether or not they feel sick, can reduce your risk of catching the virus from them. If possible, avoid being around a person who has COVID-19 until they can [safely end home isolation](#). Sometimes it may not be practical for you to stay away from a person who has COVID-19 or you may want to help take care of them. In those situations, use as many prevention strategies as you can, such as practicing hand hygiene, consistently and correctly wearing a high-quality mask, improving ventilation, and keeping your distance, when possible, from the person who is sick or who tested positive.



Prevention Actions to Add as Needed

There are some additional prevention actions that may be done at any level, but CDC especially recommends considering in certain circumstances or at medium or high [COVID-19 Community Levels](#).

- [Wearing Masks or Respirators](#)
- [Increasing Space and Distance](#)

Wearing Masks or Respirators

Masks are made to contain droplets and particles that you breathe, cough, or sneeze out. A variety of masks are available. Some masks provide a higher level of protection than others.

Respirators (for example, N95) are made to protect you by fitting closely on the face to filter out particles, including the virus that causes COVID-19. They can also block droplets and particles you breathe, cough, or sneeze out so you do not spread them to others. Respirators (for example, N95) provide higher protection than masks.

When wearing a mask or respirator (for example, N95), it is most important to choose one that you can wear correctly, that fits closely to your face over your mouth and nose, that provides good protection, and that is comfortable for you.



Increasing Space and Distance

Small particles that people breathe out can contain virus particles. The closer you are to a greater number of people, the more likely you are to be exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19. To avoid this possible exposure, you may want to avoid crowded areas, or keep distance between yourself and others. These actions also protect people who are at [high risk for getting very sick from COVID-19](#) in settings where there are [multiple risks for exposure](#).



Additional Resources

[COVID-19 Community Levels](#)

[Science Brief: SARS-CoV-2 Transmission](#)

Science Brief: Indicators for Monitoring COVID-19 Community Levels and Making Public Health Recommendations

Science Brief: Community Use of Masks to Control the Spread of SARS-CoV-2

Science Brief: COVID-19 Vaccines and Vaccination

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