



## Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

MENU >

WEAR A MASK. PROTECT OTHERS.

# How to Protect Yourself & Others

## Protect Yourself

Updated July 31, 2020

[Print](#)

**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 serious complications from COVID-19 illness. More information on [Are you at higher risk for serious 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, sneezes or talks.
  - These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.
  - Some recent studies have suggested that COVID-19 may be spread by people who are not showing symptoms.

## Everyone Should



### Wash 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.
- It's especially important to wash:
  - Before eating or preparing food
  - Before touching your face
  - After using the restroom
  - After leaving a public place
  - After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
  - After handling your mask
  - After changing a diaper
  - After caring for someone sick

- After touching animals or pets
- 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

- **Inside your home:** Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
  - If possible, maintain 6 feet between the person who is sick and other household members.
- **Outside your home:** Put 6 feet of distance between yourself and people who don't live in your household.
  - Remember that some people without symptoms may be able to spread virus.
  - **Stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms' length) from other people.**
  - Keeping distance from others is especially important for **people who are at higher risk of getting very sick.**



## Cover your mouth and nose with a mask when around others

- You could spread COVID-19 to others even if you do not feel sick.
- The mask is meant to protect other people in case you are infected.
- Everyone should wear a **mask** in public settings and when around people who don't live in your household, especially when other **social distancing** measures are difficult to maintain.
  - Masks should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.
- Do NOT use a mask meant for a healthcare worker. Currently, surgical masks and N95 respirators are critical supplies that should be reserved for healthcare workers and other first responders.
- Continue to keep about 6 feet between yourself and others. The mask is not a substitute for social distancing.



## Cover coughs and sneezes

- **Always cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow and do not spit.
- **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.



## 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.
- **Then, use a household disinfectant.** Most common **EPA-registered household disinfectants** [↗](#) will work.



## Monitor Your Health Daily

- **Be alert for symptoms.** Watch for fever, cough, shortness of breath, or **other symptoms of COVID-19.**

- Especially important if you are [running essential errands](#), going into the office or workplace, and in settings where it may be difficult to keep a [physical distance of 6 feet](#).
- **Take your temperature** if symptoms develop.
  - Don't take your temperature within 30 minutes of exercising or after taking medications that could lower your temperature, like acetaminophen.
- Follow [CDC guidance](#) if symptoms develop.

## Stop the Spread of Germs

### Robert R. Redfield, MD | #COVIDStopsWithMe

CDC Director Robert R. Redfield, MD discusses how we can slow the spread of COVID-19.

### COVID-19 Stop the Spread of Germs

Help stop the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses by following these steps.

## Handwashing Resources



[Handwashing tips](#)



[Hand Hygiene in Healthcare Settings](#)

### More information

[Symptoms](#)

[What to do if you are sick](#)

[If someone in your house gets sick](#)

[Frequently asked questions](#)

[Travelers](#)

[Individuals, schools, events, businesses and more](#)

[Healthcare Professionals](#)

[10 Things You Can Do to Manage COVID-19 at Home](#)

[10 Things You Can Do to Manage COVID-19 at Home \(ASL Version\)](#)

[Social Distancing \(ASL Video\)](#)

[ASL Video Series: What You Need to Know About Handwashing](#)