

## What New Yorkers Need to Know Now About COVID-19

As New York City reopens and we leave home more, always keep in mind the “Core Four” actions to prevent COVID-19 transmission:

- **Stay home if sick:** Monitor your health and stay home if you are sick except for getting essential medical care (including [COVID-19 testing](#)) and other essential needs.
- **Physical distancing:** Stay at least 6 feet away from people who are not members of your household.
- **Wear a face covering:** Protect those around you. Wearing a face covering helps reduce the spread of COVID-19, especially if you are sick and don’t have symptoms. For more information about face coverings, visit [nyc.gov/health/coronavirus](#) and look for "[FAQ About Face Coverings](#)."
- **Practice healthy hand hygiene:** Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available; clean frequently touched surfaces regularly; avoid touching your face with unwashed hands; and cover your cough or sneeze with your arm, not your hands.

### How does COVID-19 spread?

- The virus is most likely to spread to people who are in close contact (within about 6 feet) with a person who has COVID-19. It is spread through droplets that are sprayed when a person coughs, sneezes, sings, or talks.
- People who have no symptoms can spread the virus.
- It may be possible for people to get COVID-19 by touching a surface that has the virus on it and then touching their mouth, nose, or eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

### What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

- People with COVID-19 have reported a wide range of symptoms, ranging from mild to severe. Some people do not have any symptoms.
- Symptoms **may appear 2-14 days after exposure** to the virus. People with the following symptoms may have COVID-19 (this does not include all possible symptoms):
  - Fever or chills
  - Cough
  - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
  - Fatigue
  - Muscle or body aches
  - Headache
  - Loss of taste or smell
  - Sore throat
  - Congestion or runny nose
  - Nausea or vomiting
  - Diarrhea
- Children have similar symptoms as adults and generally have mild illness. Doctors have identified a rare but serious condition in some children, called multisystem inflammatory systems in children (MIS-C), that is associated with COVID-19. For more information, visit [nyc.gov/health/coronavirus](#) and look for "[Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children](#)."

## Who is at higher risk of severe illness if they have COVID-19?

- Severe illness means that the person with COVID-19 may require hospitalization, intensive care, a ventilator, or may even die. People who are at increased risk of severe illness need to be especially careful to monitor their health and contact their health care provider if they have any symptoms.
- **Among adults, the risk for severe illness from COVID-19 increases with age**, with older adults at highest risk. For example, people in their 50s are at higher risk for severe illness than people in their 40s. Similarly, people in their 60s or 70s are, in general, at higher risk than people in their 50s.
- People of any age with **the following underlying health conditions** are at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19:
  - Cancer
  - Chronic kidney disease
  - COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
  - Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from solid organ transplant
  - Obesity (body mass index of 30 or higher)
  - Serious heart conditions, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, or cardiomyopathies
  - Sickle cell disease
  - Type 2 diabetes mellitus
- We are still learning about COVID-19, and there may be other health conditions that increase the risk of severe illness. Based on what we know at this time, people with the following conditions **might** be at an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19:
  - Asthma (moderate-to-severe)
  - Cerebrovascular disease (affects blood vessels and blood supply to the brain)
  - Cystic fibrosis
  - Hypertension or high blood pressure
  - Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from blood or bone marrow transplant, immune deficiencies, HIV, use of corticosteroids, or use of other immune weakening medicines
  - Neurologic conditions, such as dementia
  - Liver disease
  - Pregnancy
  - Pulmonary fibrosis (having damaged or scarred lung tissues)
  - Smoking
  - Thalassemia (a type of blood disorder)
  - Type 1 diabetes mellitus
- Children who are medically complex, who have neurologic, genetic, or metabolic conditions, or who have congenital heart disease might be at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19 compared to other children.
- For additional information, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-increased-risk.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-increased-risk.html).

## How can I protect myself and others from COVID-19?

- Follow the “[Core Four](#)”! (see page 1)
- As we go out more, keep the following in mind:
  - Stick to smaller groups and to people you trust to follow the Core Four.
  - Outside is safer than inside, as there is less risk of spread.
  - Pick activities where it is easier to stay 6 feet apart, like frisbee, bicycling, and picnics.
- Visit [nyc.gov/health/coronavirus](https://www.nyc.gov/health/coronavirus) and see “[Tips on Getting Together Safely](#)” for other ideas.

### **I am older or have an underlying health condition, is it safe for me to go out?**

- If you have an underlying health conditions that increases your risk of severe COVID-19 or are 65 or older, consider staying home as much as possible to protect yourself. Work from home if you can, avoid crowds and gatherings, and be sure to practice physical distancing and other precautions if you go out.
- Get your groceries and other necessities delivered, have someone get them for you, or shop during off-peak hours.
- Exercise is important! Go outside to get fresh air but be careful to follow the “[Core Four](#)” (see page 1) when you do.
- Discuss with your health care provider, who is in the best position to understand your individual health risks. For help finding a health care provider, see below.

### **What kinds of COVID-19 tests are available?**

- There are two types of tests:
  - **Diagnostic tests:** swab or saliva tests used to identify whether someone **currently** has COVID-19 (whether they are currently sick).
  - **Antibody tests (or serology tests):** blood tests used to identify whether someone had COVID-19 in the **past**.
- For more information, visit [nyc.gov/health/coronavirus](https://nyc.gov/health/coronavirus) and look for “[COVID-19 Testing: Frequently Asked Questions](#).”

### **Who should get a diagnostic test for COVID-19 to see if they are currently infected?**

- All New Yorkers should get tested for COVID-19. It is especially important to get tested if:
  - You have symptoms
  - Were in close contact with someone who was diagnosed with COVID-19 or had symptoms of COVID-19
  - Were recently at a protest or other large gathering
  - Are planning to visit someone at high risk of severe illness
  - Live or work in a group residential setting (such as a nursing home)
  - Work in health care or a job that involves regular close contact with others

### **What should I do if I have COVID-19 symptoms?**

- **Consult with your health care provider!** Call your health care provider if you have symptoms, especially if you are an older adult, pregnant, or have health conditions that put you at increased risk for severe illness. Use telephone or telemedicine when possible.
- **Get tested!** If your provider doesn’t offer testing, visit [nyc.gov/covidtest](https://nyc.gov/covidtest) to find a testing site near you or call **311**. Many sites offer free testing.
- **Stay home!** Do not leave home except to get testing and other essential medical care or to get basic needs such as groceries, if someone can’t get them for you. Do not go to work, even if you are an essential worker.

### **When should I get medical care or call 911?**

- Now is a good time to get necessary medical care that you may have been delaying, such as vaccinations for you or your children, care for chronic conditions, routine testing and screenings, and well check exams. Health care providers are taking extra steps to keep you safe during the COVID-19 public health emergency. For more information, visit [nyc.gov/health/coronavirus](https://nyc.gov/health/coronavirus) and look for “[Get the Medical Care You Need.](#)”
- It is important that you get emergency medical care for COVID-19 and other health problems when needed. Go to an emergency room or call **911** immediately if you have:
  - Trouble breathing
  - Persistent pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
  - New confusion or inability to stay awake
  - Blue lips or face
  - Difficulty speaking
  - Sudden face drooping
  - Numbness in the face, arm, or leg
  - Seizure
  - Any sudden and severe pain
  - Uncontrolled bleeding
  - Severe or persistent vomiting or diarrhea
  - Any other emergency condition

### **What if I don't have a health care provider or health insurance?**

- If you need a health care provider, NYC Health + Hospitals welcomes all New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status or ability to pay.
- Visit [nychealthandhospitals.org](https://nychealthandhospitals.org) for more information and to search for a health care provider, or call 844-NYC-4NYC (844-692-4692) or **311**.

### **I have COVID-19 or symptoms of COVID-19. What can I do to protect others in my household?**

- Stay at least 6 feet away from everyone as much possible.
- Wear a face covering, especially if you are within 6 feet of others.
- Use a separate bathroom if available. If you share a bathroom, disinfect frequently touched surfaces after each use.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your arm when sneezing or coughing, not your hands. Immediately throw out tissues and wash your hands afterward.
- Clean surfaces that are touched frequently, such as counters, doorknobs, remote controls, and phones after each use or at least once every day. Use a household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Do not share personal household items, such as glasses, cups, eating utensils and towels.
- If you share a bed, one person should sleep on the couch or sleep head to toe in the bed.
- Move seating and other furniture around to maintain physical distance.
- Do not have visitors come to your home.
- If you cannot safely separate from other household members, call **311** or 844-NYC-4NYC (1-844-692-4692) for information about free hotel rooms for people who have or may have COVID-19. You can also visit [nyc.gov/covidhotel](https://nyc.gov/covidhotel) for more information.

### **What should I do if I'm sick and need to leave home for medical care or essential supplies?**

- Wear a face covering and stay at least 6 feet away from others.
- Wash your hands with soap and water before going out and use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer while outside.
- Avoid other people as much as possible — walk if you can and do not enter crowded stores or transportation.

### **How long do I have to stay home if I have or may have COVID-19?**

- If you have or may have COVID-19, you can leave your home when **all** the following are true:
  - It has been **at least 10 days** since your symptoms started;
  - You have not had a fever for the prior 24 hours without use of fever-reducing drugs; **and**
  - Your overall illness has improved.
- If you tested positive for COVID-19 by a swab or saliva virus test but have never had symptoms, stay home for 10 days from the date you were tested.
- Your health care provider may recommend a longer period of isolation due to underlying health conditions or based on the course of your illness. Also, your employer may require you to stay out of work for a different period of time, based on NYS requirements.
- We still don't know if someone can get COVID-19 again so it's important to continue physical distancing, wear a face covering, and practice healthy hand hygiene when outside your home.

### **These are difficult times. How can I manage stress and anxiety?**

- It is natural to feel overwhelmed, sad, anxious and afraid, or to experience other symptoms of distress, such as trouble sleeping. To lower your stress and manage the situation try to stay positive and remind yourself of your strengths.
- Stay connected with friends and loved ones via phone calls, social media, and video chat. You can also meet at the park or other open space – but keep at least 6 feet of distance and wear a face covering.
- Enjoy the outdoors and get some exercise but remember to follow the “[Core Four](#)” when you do so!
- Visit the “App Library” at [nyc.gov/nycwell](https://nyc.gov/nycwell) for online tools to help you manage your health and emotional well-being.
- NYC Well, a free and confidential mental health support service, has trained counselors available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to provide brief counseling and referrals to care. Call 888-NYC-WELL (888-692-9355), text "WELL" to 65173, or visit [nyc.gov/nycwell](https://nyc.gov/nycwell).
- New York State's COVID-19 Emotional Support Helpline has trained professionals to provide support and referrals to care. It is available 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. seven days a week at 844-863-9314.

### **For more information:**

- Visit [nyc.gov/health/coronavirus](https://nyc.gov/health/coronavirus) and [cdc.gov/covid19](https://cdc.gov/covid19).
- Text “COVID” to 692-692 for real-time updates. Message and data rates may apply.

**The NYC Health Department may change recommendations as the situation evolves.**

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