



**COUNTY OF POLK**  
**Health Department**  
www.polkcountyiowa.gov/health

Helen Eddy, Director  
1907 Carpenter Avenue  
Des Moines, Iowa 50314  
Ph. 515.286.3798  
Fax. 515.286.2033

**Keeping your family healthy if a family member is sick with COVID-19**

Shared space: If you have to share space, make sure the room has good air flow.

- Open the window and turn on a fan (if possible) to increase air circulation.
- Improving ventilation helps remove respiratory droplets from the air.

**Eat in separate rooms or areas**

- Stay separated: The person who is sick should eat (or be fed) in their room, if possible.
- Wash dishes and utensils using gloves and hot water: Handle any dishes, cups/glasses, or silverware used by the person who is sick with gloves. Wash them with soap and hot water or in a dishwasher.

**Avoid sharing personal items**

- Do not share: Do not share dishes, cups/glasses, silverware, towels, bedding, or electronics with the person who is sick

**When to wear a cloth face cover or gloves**

**Sick person:**

- The person who is sick should wear a [cloth face covering](#) when they are around other people at home and out (including before they enter a doctor's office).
- The cloth face covering helps prevent a person who is sick from spreading the virus to others. It keeps respiratory droplets contained and from reaching other people.
- Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is not able to remove the covering without help.

**Caregiver:**

- Wear gloves when you touch or have contact with blood, stool, or body fluids, such as saliva, mucus, vomit, and urine. Throw out gloves into a lined trash can.
- A caregiver may wear a [cloth face covering](#) when caring for a person who is sick, however the protective effects (how well the cloth face covering protects healthy people from breathing in the virus) are unknown.
  - To prevent getting sick, make sure you practice everyday preventive actions: clean hands often, avoid touching your eyes, mouth, nose with unwashed hands, frequently clean and disinfect surfaces.

**Clean your hands often**

- **Wash hands:** Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Tell everyone in the home to do the same, especially after being near the person who is sick.

- **Hand sanitizer:** 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.
- **Hands off:** Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

### **Clean and then disinfect around the house**

- Clean and disinfect “high-touch” surfaces and items every day: This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, toilets, faucets, sinks, and electronics.
- Clean the area or item with soap and water if it is dirty. Then, use a household disinfectant.
- Be sure to follow the instructions on the label to ensure safe and effective use of the product. Many products recommend keeping the surface wet for several minutes to kill germs. Many also recommend wearing gloves, making sure you have good air flow, and wiping or rinsing off the product after use.
- Most household disinfectants should be effective. A list of EPA-registered disinfectants.

### **Cleaning electronics**

- To clean electronics, follow the manufacturer’s instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products. If those directions are not available, use alcohol-based wipes or spray containing at least 70% alcohol.

### **Cleaning Bedrooms and Bathrooms**

- If you are using a separate bedroom and bathroom: Only clean the area around the person who is sick when needed, such as when the area is soiled. This will help limit your contact with the sick person.
- If sharing a bathroom: The person who is sick should clean and then disinfect after each use. If this is not possible, the caregiver and household member should wait as long as possible before entering the bathroom and clean and disinfect the bathroom before use.

### **Washing and Drying Laundry**

- Do not shake dirty laundry.
- Wear disposable gloves while handling dirty laundry.
- Dirty laundry from a person who is sick can be washed with other people’s items.
- Wash items according to the label instructions. Use the warmest water setting you can.
- Remove gloves, and wash hands right away.
- Dry laundry, on hot if possible, completely.
- Wash hands after putting clothes in the dryer.
- Clean and disinfect clothes hampers. Wash hands after.

### **Use a Lined Trash Can**

- Place used disposable gloves and other contaminated items in a lined trashcan.
- Use gloves when removing garbage bags, and handling and disposing of trash. Wash hands afterwards.
- Place all used disposable gloves, facemasks, and other contaminated items in a lined trash can.
- If possible, dedicate a lined trashcan for the person who is sick.

**Call your doctor or 911 if symptoms get worse**

Common symptoms include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Trouble breathing is a more serious warning sign that you need medical attention.

- If you are having trouble breathing, call 911.
- Call your doctor or emergency room and tell them your symptoms before going in. They will tell you what to do.

*Updated 4/28/2020*