CDC Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

What You Can Do

Stay home and avoid close contact, especially if you are at higher risk of severe illness or if you may have issues getting assistance if you get sick.

Steps you can take

If you are at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19 because of your age or because you have a serious long-term health problem, it is extra important for you to take actions to reduce your risk of getting sick with the disease.

- **Stay home if possible.**
- **Wash your hands** often.
- **Take everyday precautions to keep space between yourself and others** (stay 6 feet away, which is about two arm lengths).
- **Keep away from** people who are sick.
- **Stock up on supplies.**
- **Clean and disinfect** frequently touched services.
- **Avoid all cruise travel** and non-essential air travel.
- **Call your healthcare professional if you have concerns** about COVID-19 and your underlying condition or if you are sick.
- Steps You Can Take (Printer Friendly version) 📄

> **Related:** How to Protect Yourself

Coping with stress

Older people and **people of any age who have serious underlying health conditions** are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. **People who may have issues getting assistance** if they become ill, like those experiencing homelessness or people with disabilities are also at increased risk from COVID-19.

These conditions and situations may result in **increased stress** during this pandemic. Fear and anxiety can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions.

Things you can do to support yourself:

- **Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news** stories and social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.
- **Take care of your body.** Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep, and avoid alcohol and drugs.
- **Make time to unwind.** Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- **Connect with others.** Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.
- **Call your healthcare provider if stress gets in the way** of your daily activities for several days in a row.

- **If you, or someone you care about, are feeling overwhelmed** with emotions like sadness, depression, or anxiety, or feel like you want to harm yourself or others call
  - 911
  - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746. (TTY 1-800-846-8517)

> **Related:** Stress and Coping

Have a plan for if you get sick

- **Know how to stay in touch with others by phone or email.** You may need to ask for help from friends, family, neighbors, and community health workers if you become sick.
- **Determine who can care for you** if your caregiver gets sick.

- **Contact your healthcare provider to ask about obtaining extra necessary medications** to have on hand in case there is an outbreak of COVID-19 in your community and you need to stay home for a prolonged period of time.
- If you cannot get extra medications, consider using **mail-order for medications**.
- **Be sure you have over-the-counter medicines and medical supplies** (tissues, etc.) to treat fever and other symptoms. Most people will be able to recover from COVID-19 at home.
- **Have enough household items and groceries** on hand so that you will be prepared to stay at home.
- **Consider ways of getting medications and food brought to your house** through family, social, or commercial networks.
- **Have a plan for someone to care for your pets** during your illness.

> **Related:** Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Home

Check with your local public health officials

Depending on how severe the outbreak is, **your local public health officials may recommend community actions** to reduce people's risk of being exposed to COVID-19. These actions can slow the spread and reduce the impact of disease.

Stay home as much as possible. Take extra measures to put distance between yourself and other people to further reduce your risk of being exposed to this new virus.

> **Related:** List of Local Health Departments

What to do if you have symptoms

Watch for symptoms and emergency warning signs.

- **Pay attention for potential COVID-19 symptoms** including, fever, cough, and shortness of breath.
- If you feel like you are developing symptoms, **stay home and call your doctor**. Tell them that you have or may have COVID-19. This will help them take care of you and keep other people from getting infected or exposed.
- **If you are not sick enough to be hospitalized**, you can recover at home.

- **If you develop emergency warning signs for COVID-19 get medical attention immediately.** In adults, emergency warning signs* are:
  - Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
  - Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
  - New confusion or inability to arouse
  - Bluish lips or face

*This list is not all inclusive. Please consult your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning.

> **Related:** Symptoms and Testing | What to do if You Are Sick

What others can do

Community support

Community preparedness planning for COVID-19 should include **older adults and people with disabilities,** and the organizations that support them in their communities, to ensure their needs are taken into consideration. Many of these individuals live in the community, and many depend on services and supports provided in their homes or in the community to maintain their health and independence.

Long-term care facilities should be vigilant to prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19. See guidance for long-term care facilities.

> **Related:** Schools, Workplaces, and Community Locations

Family and caregiver support

- **Know what medications your loved one is taking** and see if you can help them have extra on hand.
- **Monitor food and other medical supplies** (oxygen, incontinence, dialysis, wound care) needed and create a back-up plan.
- **Stock up on non-perishable food** to have on hand in your home to minimize trips to stores.
- **If you care for a loved one living in a care facility**, monitor the situation, ask about the health of the other residents frequently and know the protocol if there is an outbreak.

> **Related:** If you are Sick or Caring for Someone

More information

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