



What to Do If You Are Sick

Updated Mar. 22, 2022

If you test positive and are an older adult or someone who is at [high risk](#) of getting very sick from COVID-19, [treatment is available](#). Contact a healthcare provider right away after a positive test to determine if you are eligible, even if your symptoms are mild right now. You can also visit a [Test to Treat location](#) [↗](#) and, if eligible, receive a prescription from a provider. Don't delay: Treatment must be started within the first few days to be effective.

If you have a fever, cough, or [other symptoms](#), you might have COVID-19. Most people have mild illness and are able to recover at home. If you are sick:

- Keep track of your symptoms.
- If you have [an emergency warning sign](#) (including trouble breathing), call 911.

Steps to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 if you are sick

If you test positive for COVID-19 or have symptoms, regardless of vaccination status, follow the steps below to care for yourself and to help protect other people in your home and community.



Stay home for at least 5 days

- **Stay home for 5 days and isolate from others in your home.** Most people with COVID-19 have mild illness and can recover at home without medical care. Do not leave your home, except to get medical care. Do not visit public areas and do not go to places where you are unable to wear a mask
- **Take care of yourself.** Get rest and stay hydrated. Take over-the-counter medicines, such as acetaminophen, to help you feel better.
- **Stay in touch with your doctor.** Call before you get medical care. Be sure to get care if you have trouble breathing, or have any other [emergency warning signs](#), or if you think it is an [emergency](#).
- **Do not travel and avoid public transportation,** ride-sharing, or taxis if possible.



Isolation and Exposure Calculator

A tool to help you determine if you need to isolate or take other steps to prevent spreading COVID-19.

[Isolation & Exposure](#)



Separate yourself from other people

As much as possible, stay in a specific room and away from other people and pets in your home. If possible, you should use a separate bathroom. If you need to be around other people or animals in or outside of the home, wear a well-fitting [mask](#).

Tell your close contacts that they may have been exposed to COVID-19. An infected person can spread COVID-19 starting 48 hours (or 2 days) before the person has any symptoms or tests positive. By letting your [close contacts](#) know they may have been exposed to COVID-19, you are helping to protect everyone.

- See [COVID-19 and Animals](#) if you have questions about pets.
- If you are diagnosed with COVID-19, someone from the health department may call you. [Answer the call](#) to slow the spread.



Monitor your symptoms

- [Symptoms](#) of COVID-19 include fever, cough, or other symptoms.
- **Follow care instructions from your healthcare provider and local health department.** Your local health authorities may give instructions on checking your symptoms and reporting information.

When to seek emergency medical attention

Look for **emergency warning signs*** for COVID-19. If someone is showing any of these signs, **seek emergency medical care immediately**:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion
- Inability to wake or stay awake
- Pale, gray, or blue-colored skin, lips, or nail beds, depending on skin tone

*This list is not all possible symptoms. Please call your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning to you.

Call 911 or call ahead to your local emergency facility: Notify the operator that you are seeking care for someone who has or may have COVID-19.



Call ahead before visiting your doctor

- **Call ahead.** Many medical visits for routine care are being postponed or done by phone or telemedicine.
- **If you have a medical appointment that cannot be postponed, call your doctor's office,** and tell them you have or may have COVID-19. This will help the office protect themselves and other patients.



If you are sick, wear a well-fitting mask

- **You should wear a [mask](#)** if you must be around other people or animals, including pets (even at home).
- Wear a [mask](#) with the best fit, protection, and comfort for you.
- You don't need to wear the mask if you are alone. If you can't put on a mask (because of trouble breathing, for example), cover your coughs and sneezes in some other way. Try to stay at least 6 feet away from other people. This will help protect the people around you.
- Masks should not be placed on young children under age 2 years, anyone who has trouble breathing, or anyone who is not able to remove the mask without help.



Cover your coughs and sneezes

- **Cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.

Throw away used tissues in a lined trash can

Throw away used tissues in a lined trash can.

- **Immediately wash your hands** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.



Clean your hands often

- **Wash your hands** often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. This is especially important after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.
- **Use hand sanitizer** if soap and water are not available. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry.
- **Soap and water** are the best option, especially if hands are visibly dirty.
- **Avoid touching** your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- [Handwashing Tips](#)



Avoid sharing personal household items

- **Do not share** dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people in your home.
- **Wash these items thoroughly after using them** with soap and water or put in the dishwasher.



Clean surfaces in your home regularly

- **Clean and disinfect** high-touch surfaces (for example, doorknobs, tables, handles, light switches, and countertops) in your “sick room” and bathroom. In shared spaces, you should clean and disinfect surfaces and items after each use by the person who is ill.
- **If you are sick and cannot clean**, a caregiver or other person should only clean and disinfect the area around you (such as your bedroom and bathroom) on an as needed basis. Your caregiver/other person should wait as long as possible (at least several hours) and wear a mask before entering, cleaning, and disinfecting shared spaces that you use.
- **Clean and disinfect areas that may have blood, stool, or body fluids on them.**
- **Use household cleaners and disinfectants.** Clean visible dirty surfaces with household cleaners containing soap or detergent. Then, use a household disinfectant.
 - • Use a product from [EPA's List N: Disinfectants for Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) [↗](#)
 - 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 with a disinfectant for a certain period of time (look at “contact time” on the product label).
 - You may also need to wear personal protective equipment, such as gloves, depending on the directions on the product label.
 - Immediately after disinfecting, [wash your hands](#) with soap and water for 20 seconds.



Take steps to improve ventilation at home

- **Improve ventilation (air flow) at home** to help prevent from spreading COVID-19 to other people in your household.
- **Clear out COVID-19 virus particles in the air** by opening windows, using air filters, and turning on fans in your home.
- Use [this interactive tool](#) to learn how to improve air flow in your home.



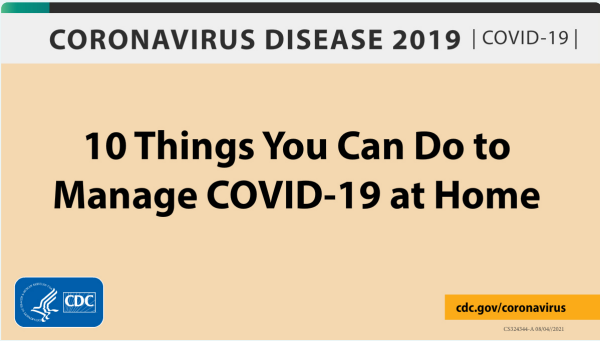
When you can be around others after being sick with COVID-19

Deciding when you can be around others is different for different situations. Find out when you can [safely end home isolation](#)

END HOME ISOLATION.

For any additional questions about your care, contact your healthcare provider or state or local health department.

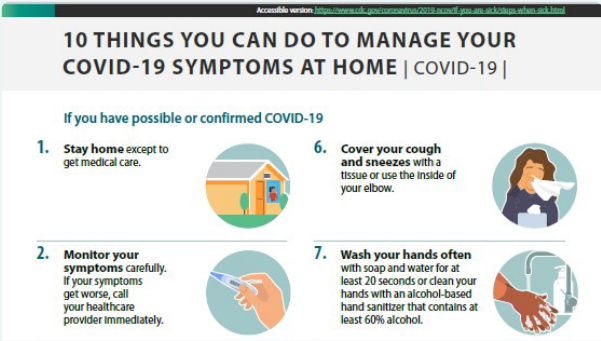
Video and Print Resources



10 Things You Can Do to Manage COVID-19 at Home

Video Length: 00:01:32

Watch Video



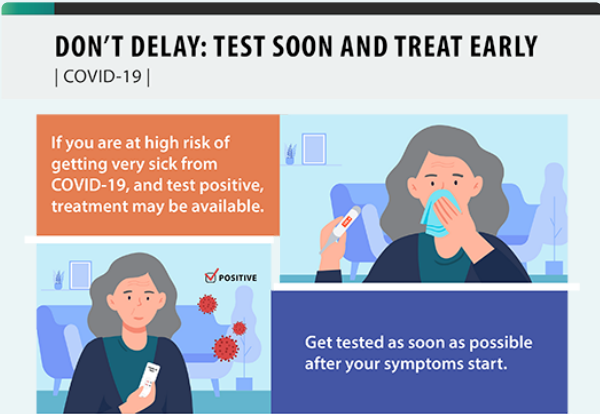
[PDF - 484 KB, 1 page]

10 Things You Can Do to Manage Your COVID-19 Symptoms at Home

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Don't Delay: Test Soon and Treat Early

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