COVID-19: Vaccines and Prevention

You can protect yourself, your household, and your community from severe illness from COVID-19. The best prevention is to have no contact with the SARS-CoV-2 virus, to follow safety precautions, and to get vaccinated. COVID-19 vaccines are available for people 6 months of age and older, including. pregnant and breastfeeding people

Vaccines help prevent COVID-19 and reduce the severity of illness if you get the virus. No vaccine is ever 100% effective in preventing any illness, but the COVID-19 vaccines work well and are safe. Talk with your healthcare provider about your risks and which vaccine may be best for you and your family.

COVID-19 vaccines are given as a shot (injection) into the muscle. CDC recommends the 2023–2024 updated COVID-19 vaccines: Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, or Novavax, to protect against serious illness from COVID-19. Vaccine recommendations are based on age, time since last dose, and in some cases, the first vaccine received. Talk with your healthcare provider about which vaccine is best for you and your family.

Take precautions: Know your community

Know about the impact of COVID-19 in your area. This is called [COVID-19 Community Level](). Follow local instructions about being in public. Be aware of events in your community that may be postponed or canceled, such as school and sporting events. You may be advised not to attend public gatherings.

To prevent possible COVID-19 exposure, you may want to stay away from crowded areas and keep space between yourself and others. Move events outdoors instead of inside, if possible. You are less likely to be infected with COVID-19 during outdoor activities because the virus does not build up in the air outdoors as much as it does indoors. See the [CDC website for guidance on improving airflow]().

Follow your community's mask guidance based on your area's Community Level. Wear a high-quality, well-fitted mask as advised. See the [CDC website about mask use]().

Stay informed about COVID-19 travel guidelines in your area, such as mask requirements in public areas. Even if you are fully vaccinated, don't travel if you have COVID-19 symptoms, have tested positive for COVID, or are waiting for the results of a COVID-19 test. Be aware of the most current [CDC travel advice]()..

Know when to get tested for COVID-19. See the [CDC testing website]() for detailed information on when to test and how to get COVID-19 tests. If you have COVID-19 symptoms, test right away.

When you are at home

- Wash your hands often. Use soap and clean, running water for at least 20 seconds.

- If you don't have access to soap and water, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer often. Make sure it has at least 60% alcohol.

- Don't touch your eyes, nose, or mouth unless you have clean hands.

- Don't kiss someone who is sick.

- If you need to cough or sneeze, do it into a tissue. Then throw the tissue into the trash. If you don't have tissues, cough or sneeze into the bend of your elbow.

- When possible, don't touch "high-touch" shared surfaces such as doorknobs and handles, cabinet handles, and light switches.

- Clean frequently-touched home surfaces often with disinfectant. This includes desk surfaces, printers, phones, kitchen counters, tables, fridge door handle, bathroom surfaces, and any soiled surface. Closely follow disinfectant label instructions.

- Check your home supplies. Consider keeping a 2-week supply of medicines, food, and other needed household items. Ask your healthcare provider and check with your insurance plan about ordering a 3-month supply of medicines you need regularly.

- Make a plan for childcare, work, and ways to stay in touch with others. Know who will help you if you get sick.

- Don't be around people who are sick.

- Don't share eating or drinking utensils with sick people.

If you leave home

- Stay informed about all safety instructions in your area.

- Be aware of high-touch public surfaces such as doorknobs and handles, cabinet handles, and light switches. If you touch these surfaces, try touching them using a tissue or paper towel.

- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer often. Make sure it has at least 60% alcohol.

- Don't touch your eyes, nose, or mouth unless you have clean hands.

- If you need to cough or sneeze, do it into a tissue. Then throw the tissue into the trash. If you don't have tissues, cough or sneeze into the bend of your elbow.

- Wear a mask as advised. Masks can help protect you and others from COVID-19. Consider wearing a high-quality mask or respirator in public when the COVID-19 Community Level is high, even if you are vaccinated. See the CDC's mask guidance.

If you are at a work site

- Tell your supervisor if you are well but live with someone who has COVID-19.

- Follow your employer's instructions on keeping physical distance from others.

- Consider virtual meetings over phone or video if possible.

- Don't use other people's desks, phones, equipment, or offices, if possible.

- Wash your hands often. Use soap and clean, running water for at least 20 seconds.

- If you don't have access to soap and water, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer often. Make sure it has at least 60% alcohol.

- Don't touch your eyes, nose, or mouth unless you have clean hands.

- Wear a face mask as advised by your employer, CDC guidance, and your community's instructions.

- When possible, don't touch high-touch public surfaces such as doorknobs and handles, cabinet handles, and light switches. If you touch these surfaces, clean them first with a disinfecting wipe. Or touch them using a tissue or paper towel.

- Limit group gatherings as advised.

- Consider not having office coffee or tea, or shared group foods.

- Clean work surfaces often with disinfectant. This includes desk surfaces, photocopier, printer, phones, kitchen counters, fridge door handle, bathroom surfaces, and others.

- Don't touch other people's personal work tools, such as phones, keyboards, pens, and other items.

- Don't touch other people's eating or drinking utensils.

- If you need to cough or sneeze, do it into a tissue. Then throw the tissue into the trash. If you don't have tissues, cough or sneeze into the bend of your elbow.

If you have been exposed to a person with COVID-19

The risk of getting COVID-19 is lower after exposure if you are fully vaccinated and boosted. But follow these steps regardless of your vaccine status or if you've had a previous COVID-19 infection. If you've been exposed to someone with COVID-19 or you've been told by a healthcare provider or public health authority that you were exposed:

- Wear a mask when you are around others inside your home or indoors in public as soon as you find out you were exposed. Day 0 is the day of your last exposure to someone with COVID-19. Day 1 is the first full day after your last exposure.

- Keep wearing a mask for 10 full days after you have been exposed.

- Don't go places where you are unable to wear a mask.

- Watch for symptoms such as fever, cough, and shortness of breath. If you develop symptoms, isolate in your home away from others right away and get tested. Stay home until you have your test results. See the CDC website about when you can end isolation after having COVID-19.

- If you don't develop symptoms, get tested on day 6. This is at least 5 full days after your last exposure. Test even if you don't have symptoms. If your test is negative, continue wearing a mask when around others at home or indoors in public through day 10. If you test positive, isolate right away.

When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider if you think you have COVID-19 symptoms. These can include:

- Fever

- Cough

- Trouble breathing

- Body aches

- Headache

- Chills

- Repeated shaking

- Chills

- Sore throat

- Loss of taste or smell

- Diarrhea

Follow your healthcare provider's specific instructions. If you are at risk of getting severe COVID-19 and being hospitalized, don't delay calling your provider. There are medicines and treatments that can be started to reduce serious COVID-19.

Do I still need a flu shot?

It's especially important to keep up on recommended vaccines for other illnesses. This is true if you're at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19, the flu, or pneumonia. This includes older adults and those who have long-term (chronic) health conditions. Getting a yearly flu vaccine is advised for everyone 6 months old and older, with rare exceptions. Health experts advise the flu vaccine to protect you and others. COVID-19 vaccines can be given at the same time as other vaccines.

Last modified date: 11/1/2023