

What to do if you are sick with COVID-19 or suspect you are infected

Created by the **COVID-19 Health Literacy Project** in collaboration with **Harvard Health Publishing**

What can I expect?

- COVID-19 is usually a mild illness. Healthy people under age 60 often experience symptoms similar to the flu: fever (over 100.4°F), dry cough, sore throat, and fatigue for two weeks.
- If you have mild symptoms, call your primary care doctor. Tell them if you have been in contact with anyone who might have COVID-19.
- Your doctor will tell you if and where you can get tested.
- Because testing is not yet widely available, your doctor may tell you to stay at home for 14 days or more in case you have the infection.

Should I see a doctor?

- Serious symptoms are more common in people over age 60 and those with heart disease, lung disease, or cancer. But even young, healthy people can have severe symptoms.
- When severe, COVID-19 can require hospitalization.
- Call your doctor before you go to the doctor's office or emergency room.

Call 911 if you have:

- Difficulty breathing
- New confusion or suddenly feeling drowsy
- Bluish lips or face

What is the treatment like?

- There is currently no specific treatment for COVID-19.
- Most people will begin to feel better with drinking fluids and rest.
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol) can help lower fevers and ease muscle pains.
- If you develop severe symptoms and have to go to the hospital, doctors will create a specialized plan to care for you.

How do I avoid getting others sick, too?

"Home isolate" for ~2 weeks



If you think you might have COVID-19, you should "home isolate." Decisions about stopping home isolation should be made in consultation with your doctor.

Keep away from other people



Use a separate bedroom, bathroom, and cooking space from others if possible. Wear a facemask if you have one. Avoid sharing personal items.

Keep your hands clean



Cover your coughs and sneezes. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

Keep your home clean



Clean frequently touched surfaces (tables, doorknobs, toilets, phones, keyboards, light switches) every day with alcohol solutions (70% alcohol), diluted bleach solutions, or household disinfectants.

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Prevent the spread of COVID-19

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Stay home whenever you can, except to get medical care!



Stay at least six feet from other people, even if they don't look ill. Find out what your community's policies are regarding leaving your home.

Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.



Do so before you eat or prepare food, and after you sneeze, cough, blow your nose, or visit any public place. If you cannot wash with soap and water, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.



The virus can last on some surfaces for several days. You can become infected if you touch these surfaces and then touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.

Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.



Using alcohol solutions that contain at least 70% alcohol, or diluted household bleach solutions, clean frequently used objects like phones, keys, tablets, doorknobs, and TV remotes.

Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your elbow.



Coronavirus is primarily spread through droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes near others. Do not cough or sneeze into your hand.

Plan how to take care of yourself and loved ones.



Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk and should consult with doctors about staying protected. Create a list of emergency contacts and designate space in your home for sick family members.

The DO's and DON'Ts of prevention

DO

- ✓ Stay home, except to get medical care. If you have severe symptoms, call 911.
- ✓ Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol).
- ✓ Cover your coughs and sneezes with your elbow or sleeve.
- ✓ Stay informed by visiting the COVID-19 website of your local health department, the [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov), and the [WHO](https://www.who.int).
- ✓ Stay connected with friends and family over the phone or video chat.

DON'T

- ✗ Don't leave your house or be in groups for non-essential purposes.
- ✗ Don't cough or sneeze into your hands.
- ✗ Don't gather information from unverified sources.
- ✗ Don't visit friends and family because you may put each other at greater risk.

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