CDC Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CDC 24/7: Saving Lives, Protecting People™

COVID-19

WEAR A MASK   STAY 6 FEET APART   AVOID CROWDS   GET A VACCINE

Caring for Someone Sick at Home

Advice for caregivers in non-healthcare settings

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If you are caring for someone with COVID-19 at home or in a non-healthcare setting, follow this advice to protect yourself and others. Learn what to do when someone has symptoms of COVID-19 or when someone has been diagnosed with the virus. This information also should be followed when caring for people who have tested positive but are not showing symptoms.

Note: Older adults and people of any age with serious underlying medical conditions are at higher risk for developing more severe illness from COVID-19. People at higher risk of severe illness should call their doctor as soon as symptoms start.

Provide support

Help cover basic needs

- Help the person who is sick follow their doctor's instructions for care and medicine.
  - For *most* people, symptoms last a few days, and people usually feel better after a week.
- See if over-the-counter medicines for fever help the person feel better.
- Make sure the person who is sick drinks a lot of fluids and rests.
- Help them with grocery shopping, filling

prescriptions, and getting   Make sure the person who is sick drinks a lot of fluids and rests
other items they may need.
Consider having the items delivered through a delivery service, if possible.

- Take care of their pet(s), and limit contact between the person who is sick and their pet(s) when possible.

Watch for warning signs

- Have their doctor's phone number on hand.
- Use CDC's self-checker tool to help you make decisions about seeking appropriate medical care.

- Call their doctor if the person keeps getting sicker. For medical emergencies, call 911 and tell the dispatcher that the person has or might have COVID-19.

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.

Protect yourself

Limit contact

COVID-19 spreads between people who are in close contact (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets, created when someone talks, coughs or sneezes. Staying away from others helps stop the spread of COVID-19.

The caregiver, when possible, should not be someone who is at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

The person who is sick should isolate

The sick person should separate themselves from others in the home. Learn when and how to isolate.

- If possible, have the person who is sick use a separate bedroom and bathroom. If possible, have the person who is sick stay in their own "sick room" or area and away from others. Try to stay at least 6 feet away from the sick person.
- Shared space: If you have to share space, make sure the room has good air flow.
  - Open the window to increase air circulation.
  - Improving ventilation helps remove respiratory droplets from the air.

Keep a separate bedroom and bathroom for a person who is sick

- Avoid having visitors. Avoid having any unnecessary visitors, especially visits by people who are at higher risk for severe illness.

Caregivers should quarantine

Caregivers and anyone who has been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 should stay home, except in limited circumstances. Learn when and how to quarantine.

When it's safe for a person who has been sick to be around others

Deciding when it is safe to be around others is different for different situations. Find out when someone who is sick can safely end home isolation.

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.
- Clean hands after taking off gloves or handling used items.

Avoid sharing personal items

- **Do not share:** Do not share dishes, cups/glasses, silverware, towels, bedding, or electronics (like a cell phone) with the person who is sick.

When to wear a mask or gloves

The person who is sick

- The person who is sick should wear a mask when they are around other people at home and out (including before they enter a doctor's office).
- The mask helps prevent a person who is sick from spreading the virus to others. It keeps respiratory droplets contained and from reaching other people.
- Masks 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

- Put on a mask and ask the sick person to put on a mask before entering the room.
- Wear gloves when you touch or have contact with the sick person's blood, stool, or body fluids, such as saliva, mucus, vomit, and urine. Throw out gloves into a lined trash can and wash your hands right away.
    - Practice everyday preventive actions to keep from getting sick: wash your hands often; avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth; and frequently clean and disinfect surfaces.

Note: During the COVID-19 pandemic, medical grade masks are reserved for healthcare workers and some first responders.

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.
- Learn more about handwashing.

When and how to clean surfaces and objects

Cleaning with a household cleaner that contains soap or detergent reduces the amount of germs on surfaces and objects and decreases risk of infection from surfaces. In most situations, cleaning alone removes most virus particles on surfaces.

Clean high-touch surfaces and objects regularly (for example, daily or after each use) and after you have visitors in your home.

Focus on high-touch surfaces and objects (doorknobs, tables, handles, light switches, phones, remote controls, and countertops).

Clean other surfaces in your home when they are visibly dirty or as needed. Clean them more frequently if people in your household are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19. Disinfect if certain conditions apply.

Clean surfaces using a product suitable for each surface, following instructions on the product label.

When Someone Is Sick

If someone in your home is sick or someone who has COVID-19 has been in your home in the last 24 hours, clean and disinfect your home. Disinfecting removes germs and reduces their spread. See Caring for Someone Who Is Sick at Home for more information.

For more information on cleaning and disinfecting safely, see Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Home.

Track your own health

- Caregivers should stay home and monitor their health for COVID-19 symptoms while caring for the person who is sick.
  - Symptoms include fever, cough, and shortness of breath but other symptoms may be present as well. Trouble breathing is a more serious warning sign that you need medical attention.
- Caregivers should continue to stay home after care is complete. Caregivers can leave their home 14 days after their last close contact with the person who is sick (based on the time it takes to develop illness), or 14 days after the person who is sick meets the criteria to end home isolation.
- The best way to protect yourself and others is to stay home for 14 days if you think you've been exposed to someone who has COVID-19. Check your local health department's website for information about options in your area to possibly shorten this quarantine period.
- Use CDC's self-checker tool to help you make decisions about seeking appropriate medical care.
- **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.

More Information

- People Who Need to Take Extra Precautions
- Healthcare Professionals: Information on When to End Home Isolation
- Treatments Your Healthcare Provider Might Recommend for Severe Illness

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