

# Coronavirus (COVID-19): Care Instructions

## Overview

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The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is caused by a virus. Symptoms may include a fever, a cough, and shortness of breath. It can spread through droplets from coughing and sneezing, breathing, and singing. The virus also can spread when people are in close contact with someone who is infected.

Most people have mild symptoms and can take care of themselves at home with medicine to reduce symptoms. Talk to your doctor right away if you get COVID-19. They might have you take medicine to help prevent serious illness. If your symptoms get worse, you may need care in a hospital. Treatment may include medicines, plus breathing support such as oxygen therapy or a ventilator.

It's important to not spread the virus to others. If you have COVID-19, wear a high-quality mask anytime you are around other people. Isolate yourself. Improve airflow. Leave your home only if you need to get medical care or testing.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

## How can you care for yourself at home?

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- Get extra rest. It can help you feel better.
- Drink plenty of fluids. This helps replace fluids lost from fever. Fluids may also help ease a scratchy throat.
- You can take acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) to reduce a fever. It may also help with muscle and body aches. Read and follow all instructions on the label.
- Use petroleum jelly on sore skin. This can help if the skin around your nose and lips becomes sore from rubbing a lot with tissues. If you use oxygen, use a water-based product instead of petroleum jelly.
- Keep track of symptoms such as fever and shortness of breath. This can help you know if you need to call your doctor. It can also help you know when it's safe to be around other people.
- In some cases, your doctor might suggest that you get a pulse oximeter.

## How can you self-isolate when you have COVID-19?

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If you have COVID-19, there are things you can do to help avoid spreading the virus to others.

- Stay home, and avoid contact with other people.
- Limit contact with people in your home. If possible, stay in a separate bedroom and use a separate bathroom.
- Wear a high-quality mask when you are around other people.
- Improve airflow. If you have to spend time indoors with others, open windows and doors. Or you can use a fan to blow air away from people and out a window.
- Avoid contact with pets and other animals.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then throw it in the trash right away.

- Wash your hands often, especially after you cough or sneeze. Use soap and water, and scrub for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water aren't available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Don't share personal household items. These include bedding, towels, cups and glasses, and eating utensils.
- Wash laundry in the warmest water allowed for the fabric type, and dry it completely. It's okay to wash other people's laundry with yours.
- Clean and disinfect your home. Use household cleaners and disinfectant wipes or sprays.

Go to the CDC website at [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) if you have questions.

## When can you end self-isolation for COVID-19?

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If you know or think that you have the virus, you will need to self-isolate. When you can be around other people you live with and leave home depends on whether you have symptoms. **Important:** Day 0 is the day your symptoms started or the day you tested positive. Day 1 is the day **after** your symptoms first started or your test was positive.

- **If you tested positive but had no symptoms**, it's safe to end isolation at the end of Day 5. But if you start to have symptoms, follow the recommendations below, and count your first day of symptoms as Day 0.
- **If you have symptoms**, when you can end isolation depends on how sick you were and your overall health. No matter what, you need to wait until your symptoms are getting better and you haven't had a fever for 24 hours while not taking medicines to lower the fever. Here's how long to isolate, based on your symptoms:
  - **If you were only a little sick:** (This means you might have felt really bad but had no shortness of breath and never needed to be in the hospital.) You can end isolation at the end of Day 5.
  - **If you were more sick:** (You had some shortness of breath or some trouble breathing but never needed to be in the hospital.) You can end isolation at the end of Day 10.
  - **If you were very sick and needed to be in the hospital, or if you have a weakened immune system:** You can end isolation at the end of Day 10 or later. Talk to your doctor to find out when it's safe to end isolation. You may need a viral test.
  - **After you end isolation, if your symptoms come back or get worse:** Restart your isolation at Day 0. Do this even if it happens after you took medicine for COVID.
- **Avoid travel and stay away from people at high risk for serious disease** for at least 10 days.

Call your doctor or seek care if you have questions about your symptoms or when to end isolation.

Go to the CDC website at [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) if you have questions.

## When should you call for help?

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**Call 911** anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if you have life-threatening symptoms, such as:

- You have severe trouble breathing. (You can't talk at all.)
- You have constant chest pain or pressure.

- You are severely dizzy or lightheaded.
- You are confused or can't think clearly.
- You have pale, gray, or blue-colored skin or lips.
- You pass out (lose consciousness) or are very hard to wake up.
- You have loss of balance or trouble walking.
- You have trouble seeing out of one or both eyes.
- You have weakness or drooping on one side of the face.
- You have weakness or numbness in an arm or a leg.
- You have trouble speaking.
- You have a severe headache.
- You have a seizure.

**Call your doctor now** or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have moderate trouble breathing. (You can't speak a full sentence.)
- You are coughing up blood.
- You have signs of low blood pressure. These include feeling lightheaded; being too weak to stand; and having cold, pale, clammy skin.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- Your symptoms get worse.
- You are not getting better as expected.
- You have new or worse symptoms of anxiety, depression, nightmares, or flashbacks.

**Call before you go to the doctor's office.** Follow their instructions. And wear a mask.

## Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/PatientEd>

Enter **C007** in the search box to learn more about "**Coronavirus (COVID-19): Care Instructions**".

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