

# Learning About Coronavirus (COVID-19)



## What is coronavirus (COVID-19)?

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COVID-19 is a disease caused by a type of coronavirus. This illness was first found in December 2019. It has since spread worldwide.

Coronaviruses are a large group of viruses. They cause the common cold. They also cause more serious illnesses like Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). COVID-19 is caused by a novel coronavirus. That means it's a new type that has not been seen in people before.

## What are the symptoms?

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COVID-19 symptoms may include:

- Fever.
- Cough.
- Trouble breathing.
- Chills or repeated shaking with chills.
- Muscle and body aches.
- Headache.
- Sore throat.
- New loss of taste or smell.
- Vomiting.
- Diarrhea.

In severe cases, COVID-19 can cause pneumonia and make it hard to breathe without help from a machine. It can cause death.

## How is it diagnosed?

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COVID-19 is diagnosed with a viral test. This may also be called a PCR test or antigen test. It looks for evidence of the virus in your breathing passages or lungs (respiratory system).

The test is most often done on a sample from the nose, throat, or lungs. It's sometimes done on a sample of saliva. One way a sample is collected is by putting a long swab into the back of your nose.

If you have questions about COVID-19 testing, ask your doctor or go to [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) to use the COVID-19 Viral Testing Tool.

## How is it treated?

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Mild cases of COVID-19 can be treated at home. Serious cases need treatment in the hospital. Treatment may include medicines, plus breathing support such as oxygen therapy or a ventilator. Some people may be placed on their belly to help their oxygen levels.

Treatments that may help people who have COVID-19 include:

### **Antiviral medicines.**

These medicines treat viral infections.

### **Immune-based therapy.**

These medicines help the immune system fight COVID-19. Examples include monoclonal antibodies.

### **Blood thinners.**

These medicines help prevent blood clots. People with severe illness are at risk for blood clots.

## How can you protect yourself and others?

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How can you protect yourself and others from COVID-19?

- Stay up to date on your COVID-19 vaccines.
- Avoid sick people, and stay away from others if you are sick.
- Keep some physical distance between yourself and other people.
- Avoid crowds, especially indoors.
- Wear a mask with the best fit, protection, and comfort for you. A mask can help protect you even when others aren't wearing one.
- Get tested for COVID-19 before you have an indoor visit with people who don't live with you.
- 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.
- Choose outdoor visits and activities when possible.
- Cover your mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Wash your hands often.
- Avoid touching your mouth, nose, and eyes.

Here are some other steps you may need to take.

- **If you were exposed to someone with COVID-19 AND you don't have symptoms:**

- For at least 10 full days, wear a high-quality mask when you are around other people, even those you live with.
- Get tested. Do it right away if you develop symptoms. Wait at least 5 days after you were exposed if you don't have symptoms.
- If your test is positive, call your doctor right away. The doctor may have you take a medicine to keep you from getting seriously ill. Treatment works best when started early. And isolate right away.
- Take extra care if you have to be around other people who are at high risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19. Keep some extra space between yourself and others, for example. And don't travel.
- Watch for symptoms.

#### **If you are sick or test positive for COVID-19:**

- Talk to your doctor as soon as you can. Your doctor may have you take medicine to help prevent serious illness.
- Get a COVID-19 test unless you have already been tested. You may need to be tested more than once.
- Stay home and separate yourself from others, including those you live with. Limit contact with people in your home. If possible, stay in a separate bedroom and use a separate bathroom. For at least 10 full days, anytime you're around other people, you and they should wear a high-quality mask. Children younger than 2 years old don't need to wear a mask.
- **Self-isolate until it's safe** to be around others again. (**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.

Check the CDC website at [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) for the most current information on how to protect yourself.

# 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 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?

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

Enter **C008** in the search box to learn more about "**Learning About Coronavirus (COVID-19)**".

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