Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Get Your Home Ready

FAQs for Individuals and Families

Preparing Your Home for COVID-19

How can my family and I prepare for COVID-19?

Create a household plan of action to help protect your health and the health of those you care about in the event of an outbreak of COVID-19 in your community:

- Talk with the people who need to be included in your plan, and discuss what to do if a COVID-19 outbreak occurs in your community.
- Plan ways to care for those who might be at greater risk for serious complications, particularly older adults and those with severe chronic medical conditions like heart, lung or kidney disease.
  - Make sure they have access to several weeks of medications and supplies in case you need to stay home for prolonged periods of time.
- Get to know your neighbors and find out if your neighborhood has a website or social media page to stay connected.
- Create a list of local organizations that you and your household can contact in the event you need access to information, healthcare services, support, and resources.
- Create an emergency contact list of family, friends, neighbors, carpool drivers, health care providers, teachers, employers, the local public health department, and other community resources.

What steps can my family take to reduce our risk of getting COVID-19?

Practice everyday preventive actions to help reduce your risk of getting sick and remind everyone in your home to do the same. These actions are especially important for older adults and people who have severe chronic medical conditions:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue and throw the tissue in the trash.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects (e.g., tables, countertops, light switches, doorknobs, and cabinet handles).

What should I do if someone in my house gets sick with COVID-19?

Most people who get COVID-19 will be able to recover at home. CDC has directions for people who are recovering at home and their caregivers, including:

- Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.
- If you develop emergency warning signs for COVID-19 get medical attention immediately. In adults, emergency warning signs*:
  - Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
  - Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
  - New confusion or inability to arouse
  - Bluish lips or face
  - *This list is not all inclusive. Please consult your medical provider for any other symptom that is severe or concerning.
- Use a separate room and bathroom for sick household members (if possible).
- Clean hands regularly by handwashing with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Provide your sick household member with clean disposable facemasks to wear at home, if available, to help prevent spreading COVID-19 to others.
- Clean the sick room and bathroom, as needed, to avoid unnecessary contact with the sick person.
- Avoid sharing personal items like utensils, food, and drinks.

How can I prepare in case my child's school, childcare facility, or university is dismissed?

Talk to the school or facility about their emergency operations plan. Understand the plan for continuing education and social services (such as student meal programs) during school dismissals. If your child attends a college or university, encourage them to learn about the school's plan for a COVID-19 outbreak.

How can I prepare for COVID-19 at work?

Plan for potential changes at your workplace. Talk to your employer about their emergency operations plan, including sick-leave policies and telework options. Learn how businesses and employers can plan for and respond to COVID-19.

Should I use soap and water or a hand sanitizer to protect against COVID-19?

Handwashing is one of the best ways to protect yourself and your family from getting sick. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

What cleaning products should I use to protect against COVID-19?

Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces such as tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks. If surfaces are dirty, clean them using detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection. To disinfect, most common EPA-registered household disinfectants will work. See CDC's recommendations for household cleaning and disinfection.

In Case of an Outbreak in Your Community

What should I do if there is an outbreak in my community?

During an outbreak, stay calm and put your preparedness plan to work. Follow the steps below:

Protect yourself and others.

- Stay home if you are sick. Keep away from people who are sick. Limit close contact with others as much as possible (about 6 feet).

Put your household plan into action.

- **Stay informed about the local COVID-19 situation.** Be aware of temporary school dismissals in your area, as this may affect your household's daily routine.
- **Continue practicing everyday preventive actions.** Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue and wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains 60% alcohol. Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects daily using a regular household detergent and water.
- **Notify your workplace as soon as possible if your regular work schedule changes.** Ask to work from home or take leave if you or someone in your household gets sick with COVID-19 symptoms, or if your child's school is dismissed temporarily. Learn how businesses and employers can plan for and respond to COVID-19.
- **Stay in touch with others by phone or email.** If you have a chronic medical condition and live alone, ask family, friends, and health care providers to check on you during an outbreak. Stay in touch with family and friends, especially those at increased risk of developing severe illness, such as older adults and people with severe chronic medical conditions.

How do I prepare my children in case of COVID-19 outbreak in our community?

Outbreaks can be stressful for adults and children. Talk with your children about the outbreak, try to stay calm, and reassure them that they are safe. If appropriate, explain to them that most illness from COVID-19 seems to be mild. Children respond differently to stressful situations than adults.

What steps should parents take to protect children during a community outbreak?

This is a new virus and we are still learning about it, but so far, there does not seem to be a lot of illness in children. Most illness, including serious illness, is happening in adults of working age and older adults. If there cases of COVID-19 that impact your child's school, the school may dismiss students. Keep track of school dismissals in your community. Read or watch local media sources that report school dismissals. If schools are dismissed temporarily, use alternative childcare arrangements, if needed.

If your child/children become sick with COVID-19, notify their childcare facility or school. Talk with teachers about classroom assignments and activities they can do from home to keep up with their schoolwork.

Discourage children and teens from gathering in other public places while school is dismissed to help slow the spread of COVID-19 in the community.

Will schools be dismissed if there is an outbreak in my community?

Depending on the situation, public health officials may recommend community actions to reduce exposures to COVID-19, such as school dismissals. Read or watch local media sources that report school dismissals or and watch for communication from your child's school. If schools are dismissed temporarily, discourage students and staff from gathering or socializing anywhere, like at a friend's house, a favorite restaurant, or the local shopping mall.

Should I go to work if there is an outbreak in my community?

Follow the advice of your local health officials. Stay home if you can. Talk to your employer to discuss working from home, taking leave if you or someone in your household gets sick with COVID-19 symptoms, or if your child's school is dismissed temporarily. Employers should be aware that more employees may need to stay at home to care for sick children or other sick family members than is usual in case of a community outbreak.

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