

# Interim Guidance for Preventing the Spread of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Homes and Residential Communities, and Caring for Someone in Isolation at Home

Updated March 15, 2021

Most people who get sick with COVID-19 will have only mild illness and should recover at home.\* Care at home can help stop the spread of COVID-19 and help protect people who are at risk for getting seriously ill from COVID-19. This interim guidance may help prevent this virus from spreading among people in their homes and in other residential communities. Isolation and quarantine guidance may differ for people who are fully vaccinated. See Isolation and Quarantine FAQ <https://www.coronavirus.kdheks.gov/DocumentCenter/View/134/Isolation--Quarantine-Guidance-and-FAQs-PDF---3-15-21>.

***\*Important!** Older adults and people of any age with certain serious underlying medical conditions like lung disease, heart disease, or diabetes are at higher risk for developing more serious complications from COVID-19 illness and should seek care as soon as symptoms start.*

## **This guidance provides:**

1. Basic information on how COVID-19 spreads from person to person
2. Precautions for people with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection
3. Preventative steps for household members, intimate partners and others caring for a person at home who is under investigation or has symptomatic or laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 infection)
4. When to end home isolation (staying home).

## **This interim guidance is intended for:**

- [People with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection](#), including persons under investigation, who do not need to be hospitalized and who can receive care at home
- [People with confirmed COVID-19 infection](#), who were hospitalized and then determined to be medically stable to go home
- [Household members, intimate partners and others caring for a person](#) with symptomatic or laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 infection at home or other nonhealthcare setting

Home healthcare personnel please refer to [Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Patients with Known or Patients or Under Investigation for 2019 Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) in a Healthcare Setting](#).

## 1. Basic information on how COVID-19 spreads from person to person

COVID-19 most commonly spreads between people who are in close physical contact (within about 6 feet). When people with COVID-19 cough, sneeze, sing, talk, or breathe they produce respiratory droplets. Infections occur mainly through exposure to respiratory droplets when a person is in close contact with someone who has COVID-19.

**Close contact** is defined as—

- being within approximately 6 feet (2 meters) of a COVID-19 case for a prolonged period of time (10 consecutive minutes or more); close contact can occur while caring for, living with, visiting, or sharing a health care waiting area or room with a COVID-19 case

**or**

- having direct contact with infectious secretions of a COVID-19 case (e.g., being coughed on)

The chance of spreading the virus is greater the longer an infected person or persons are close to someone. It also matters if the infected person is coughing, sneezing, singing, shouting, or doing anything else that produces more respiratory droplets that contain virus or if there are exposures to more than one infected person.

**The final decision on what constitutes close contact is made at the discretion of public health.**

Under certain circumstances (for example, when people are in enclosed spaces with poor ventilation), COVID-19 can sometimes be spread by airborne transmission.

## 2. Precautions for people with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection

Your healthcare provider and public health staff will evaluate whether you can be cared for at home. If it is determined that you do not need to be hospitalized and can be isolated at home, you may be monitored by staff from your local or state health department. You should follow the prevention steps below until a healthcare provider or local or state health department says you can return to your normal activities.

### **Stay home except to get medical care**

You should restrict activities outside your home, except for getting medical care. Do not go to work, school, or public areas. Avoid using public transportation, ride-sharing, or taxis.

## **Separate yourself from other people and animals in your home**

**People:** As much as possible, you should stay in a specific room and away from other people in your home. Also, you should use a separate bathroom, if available.

**Animals:** Do not handle pets or other animals while sick. See [COVID-19 and Animals](#) for more information.

## **Call ahead before visiting your doctor**

If you have a medical appointment or before seeking care, call the healthcare provider and tell them that you have or may have COVID-19 infection. This will help the healthcare provider's office take steps to keep other people from getting infected or exposed.

- Put on a facemask before you enter the facility (see guidance on masks in the next section). These steps will help the healthcare provider's office to keep other people in the office or waiting room from getting infected or exposed. Ask your healthcare provider to call the local or state health department. Persons who are placed under active monitoring or facilitated self-monitoring should follow instructions provided by their local health department or occupational health professionals, as appropriate.
- If you have a medical emergency and need to call 911, notify the dispatch personnel that you have, or are being evaluated for COVID-19. If possible, put on a facemask before emergency medical services arrive.

## **Wear a facemask**

You should wear a facemask when you are around other people (e.g., sharing a room or vehicle) or pets and before you enter a healthcare provider's office. KDHE recommends wearing a mask that fits snugly around the nose, mouth, and chin and has multiple layers of fabric. Alternatively, a thinner disposable mask may be worn underneath a cloth face mask to improve the fit. For more information on the mask guidance visit: <https://www.coronavirus.kdheks.gov/DocumentCenter/View/441/KDHE-Mask-Guidance-PDF---3-1-21>. If you are not able to wear a facemask (for example, because it causes trouble breathing), then people who live with you should not stay in the same room with you, or they should wear a facemask if they enter your room. As an added layer of protection, even if you are wearing a facemask, others in your household are advised to wear a facemask as well.

## **Cover your coughs and sneezes**

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or use the inside of your elbow and do not spit. Throw used tissues in a lined trash can; immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains 60 to 95% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry. Soap and water are preferred if hands are visibly dirty.

### **Clean your hands often**

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains 60 to 95% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry. Soap and water are preferred if hands are visibly dirty. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

### **Avoid sharing personal household items**

You should not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people or pets in your home. After using these items, they should be washed thoroughly with soap and hot water, or in the dishwasher.

### **Clean all “high-touch” surfaces everyday**

High touch surfaces include counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables, every day. Also, clean any surfaces that may have blood, stool, or body fluids on them. Use an EPA registered disinfectant that kills the SARS-CoV-2 virus according to the label instructions. Labels contain instructions for safe and effective use of the cleaning product including precautions you should take when applying the product, such as wearing gloves and making sure you have good ventilation during use of the product.

### **Monitor your symptoms**

Seek prompt medical attention if your illness is worsening (e.g., difficulty breathing). If you have an emergency warning sign, seek emergency medical care immediately. This includes: trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, and/or bluish lips or face. This list is not all possible symptoms. Please call your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning to you.

## **3. Preventative steps for household members, intimate partners and others caring for a person at home who is under investigation, is symptomatic or has laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 infection**

Close contacts of someone who is under investigation, is symptomatic or has laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 infection should monitor their health closely. Symptoms of COVID-19 include a measured fever of 100.4 (F) or higher and lower respiratory symptoms like coughing or shortness of breath. Other symptoms may include fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea. If the symptoms you develop are **mild** and you normally would not seek healthcare, stay home for:

- 10 days from the onset of symptoms OR
- 72 hours after fever is gone without the use of fever reducing medication AND there has been a significant improvement in symptoms
- WHICHEVER IS LONGER.

**Caregivers and close contacts should also follow these recommendations:**

- Have the healthcare provider's contact information on hand. Make sure that you understand and can help the patient follow their healthcare provider's instructions for medication(s) and care.
- Monitor the person for worsening symptoms.
  - If the person you are caring for is getting sicker, call his or her healthcare provider and tell them that the person has or are suspected to have COVID-19. This will help the healthcare provider's office take steps to keep other people in the office or waiting room from getting infected.
  - Watch for **emergency warning signs** for COVID-19 and get **medical attention immediately**. Emergency warning signs include: \*
    - Trouble breathing
    - 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 symptoms that are severe or concerning.

- If the patient has a medical emergency and you need to call 911, notify the dispatch personnel that the patient has, or is suspected of having COVID-19. Try to put a surgical mask on the patient before EMS arrives if possible.
- Prevent the spread of germs when caring for someone who is sick. Have the person stay in one room, away from other people, including yourself, as much as possible.
  - If possible, have them the person you are caring for use a separate bathroom.
  - Avoid sharing personal household items, like dishes, towels, and bedding.
  - The person who is sick should eat (or be fed) in their room if possible.
  - If facemasks are available, have the person you are caring for wear a facemask when they are around people, including you.
  - Wear a facemask while in the same room with the person you are caring for, if facemasks are available.
  - If the sick person needs to be around others (within the home, in a vehicle, or doctor's office), they should wear a facemask.
- If you are living in close quarters and cannot keep the person who is sick separate from others in your household:
  - Limit errands; choose one or two family members to run essential errands
  - Vulnerable members of your household should avoid caring for the person who is sick.
  - If you must sleep in the same room as the person who is sick, sleep head to toe.
  - Consider putting a curtain or other physical divider between the person who is

sick and other members of the household (e.g., shower curtain, room screen divider, large cardboard poster board, quilt, or large bedspread).

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after interacting with the sick person. 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.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Every day, clean all surfaces that are touched often, like counters, tabletops, and doorknobs
  - Use household cleaning sprays or wipes according to the label instructions.
  - Wear disposable gloves when cleaning areas the sick person has been in contact with.
  - Consult [Environmental Protection Agency for a list of disinfectants approved for COVID-19](#).
  - Consider placing a wipeable cover on electronics, or follow manufacturer's instruction for cleaning and disinfecting electronics regularly.
- Wash laundry thoroughly.
  - If laundry is soiled, wear disposable gloves and keep the soiled items away from your body while laundering. Wash your hands immediately after removing gloves.
  - Do not shake dirty laundry.
  - Clean and disinfect clothes hampers the same way you would disinfect high-touch surfaces.
- HVAC, ventilation and filtration
  - Check to be sure your HVAC filter is correctly in place and consider upgrading the filter to the highest-rated filter that your system can accommodate (consult your HVAC manual or and HVAC professional for details).
  - Run your HVAC system fan for longer times, or continuously.
  - Consider the use of an air purifier to reduce airborne contaminants.
  - When possible, open doors or windows to increase fresh air circulation. Avoid when outdoor air pollution is high or when it makes the home too cold, hot, or humid.
- Provide treatment for symptoms
  - Make sure the sick person drinks a lot of fluids to stay hydrated and rests at home.
  - Over-the-counter medicines may help with symptoms.
  - For *most people*, symptoms last a few days and get better after a week.
- Help the patient with basic needs in the home and provide support for getting groceries, prescriptions, and other personal needs.
- Household members should stay in another room or be separated from the patient as much as possible. Household members should use a separate bedroom and bathroom, if available.

- Prohibit visitors who do not have an essential need to be in the home.
  - If you do come in contact with people who do not live in your household, maintain 6 feet of distance. Remember, some people without symptoms may be able to spread the virus.
- Household members should care for any pets in the home. Do not handle pets or other animals while sick.
- Avoid sharing household items with the patient. You should not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, bedding, or other items. After the patient uses these items, you should wash them thoroughly with soap and hot water, or in the dishwasher.
- Place all used disposable gloves, facemasks, and other contaminated items in a lined container before disposing of them with other household waste. Clean your hands (with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer) immediately after handling these items. Soap and water should be used preferentially if hands are visibly dirty.
- Discuss any additional questions with your state or local health department or healthcare provider.

## 4. When to End Home Isolation

Patients with laboratory confirmed or suspect COVID-19 should remain under home isolation precautions until the risk of secondary transmission to others is thought to be low. The decision to discontinue home isolation precautions should be based on these guidelines.

- ***The person under isolation*** can leave home after
  - 1) At least 10 days have passed since their symptoms first appeared OR
  - 2) They have had no fever for at least 72 hours (that is three full days of no fever without the use of medicine that reduces fevers) and other symptoms have improved (for example, when their cough or shortness of breath have improved). Lingered cough, headache, fatigue, and loss of taste or smell may persist for weeks or months and should not delay the end of isolation.

Whichever is longer (meaning, a minimum of 10 days).

- 3) If the patient does not have symptoms, isolate for 10 days from the day tested.

## Additional Resources

[Interim Guidance for Implementing Home Care of People Not Requiring Hospitalization for 2019 Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

[Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Patients with Known or Patients Under Investigation for 2019 Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) in a Healthcare Setting](#)

[Animals and COVID-19](#)

[Interim US Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Persons with Potential 2019 Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Exposure in Travel-associated or Community Settings.](#)

[Caring for Someone at Home.](#)

Kansas Department of Health and Environment and the CDC will provide updates for this interim guidance as needed and as additional information becomes available.

