

# 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

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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.

*\***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 non-healthcare setting.](#)

Home healthcare personnel please refer to [Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Patients with Known or Patients Under Investigation for 2019](#)

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

COVID-19 spreads between people who are in close contact (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

Close contact is defined as—

- being within approximately 6 feet (2 meters) of a COVID-19 case for a prolonged period of time (10 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)

## 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 will 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, 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.

### **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. 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.

### **Cover your coughs and sneezes**

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. 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 water.

### **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 a household cleaning spray or wipe, 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).

**Before** seeking care, call your healthcare provider and tell them that you have, or are being evaluated for, COVID-19.

Put on a facemask before you enter the facility. 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.

### **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. If the symptoms you develop are **mild** and you normally would not seek healthcare, stay home for:

- 7 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
  - If facemasks are available, have the person you are caring for wear a facemask when they are around people, including you.
  - If the sick person can't wear a facemask, you should wear one while in the same room with them, 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.
  
- 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.
  - Consult [Environmental Protection Agency for a list of disinfectants approved for COVID-19](#).
  
- 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.
  
- 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.

- 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.
- 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 7 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)

Whichever is longer (meaning, a minimum of 7 days).

#### 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.

Last updated March 26, 2020.

