COVID-19: Staying Safe at Home

COVID-19 is a respiratory (lung) illness that is spread through coughs and sneezes. Some people who have COVID-19 get better in the hospital. Others with mild symptoms can get better at home.

In any case, there are many things you can do to decrease the risk of getting the virus or spreading it to others. There are also symptoms you should watch for to make sure you get medical care when you need it.

Protect Yourself and Others

If you have tested positive for COVID-19 or are waiting on results, it is important to isolate yourself from others in your household, including pets. Here's how to care for yourself at home:

Keep your distance. COVID-19 is usually spread between people who are in close contact with one another. Stay in a separate room and away from others in your home if possible. Use a separate bathroom, too, if available.

Clean your hands often. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, sneezing, or using the restroom. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol.

Wear a face mask. Wear a mask when you are around others. People who live with you should not be in the same room with you. They should wear a mask if they must enter your room.

Avoid contact with pets. There have been a small number of reports of pets testing positive for COVID-19. If possible, have someone else care for your animal(s). If you must care for a pet, avoid contact as much as possible. Do not touch, cuddle, or share food. Wash your hands before and after you interact with a pet, and wear a mask.

Cover your coughs and sneezes. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw away used tissues in a lined trash can.

Avoid sharing personal and household items. Do not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people or pets in your home. After using these items, wash them thoroughly with soap and water or in the dishwasher.

Clean "high-touch" surfaces often with an EPA-approved disinfectant*. High-touch surfaces include counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables. Also clean any surfaces that may have blood, stool, or body fluids on them.

Consider getting a COVID-19 vaccine. The CDC recommends COVID-19 vaccinations for everyone 12 years of age and older. Visit **TexasHealth.org/ GetYourVaccine** for more information.

Monitor your symptoms

COVID-19 Symptoms*

- Cough
- Shortness of breath/ trouble breathing
- Fever
- Chills
- Muscle pain
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell

If your symptoms get worse

Call your doctor right away

Call 911 immediately if you have any of the following emergency warning signs (and tell the operator you have or may have COVID-19):

- Trouble breathing
- Ongoing pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion
- Trouble waking up or staying awake
- Bluish lips or face

*As of May 13, 2020. Visit **CDC.gov** for the latest update

Texas Health

Healing at Home

If you are the primary caregiver for someone with COVID-19, visit the CDC's website to learn **how to care for them**. If you have COVID-19 and are also a primary caregiver (a parent with young children, for example), talk with your doctor for advice on how to best protect those in your care. Anyone in the home who is sick with COVID-19 should follow the CDC's guidance for what to do if you are sick and **when it is safe to be around others**.

Awaiting COVID-19 Test Results

If you were tested at a Texas Health hospital or clinic, a Texas Health nurse will call you when the results are available. If you have a MyChart account, your results will also be posted once available. Results can take up to a week or longer.

Seeking Medical Care

If you have COVID-19 or are waiting on test results, stay at home, except to get medical care. If symptoms get worse, call your health care provider. If you are having a medical emergency, call 911.

If you have a medical appointment, call the provider, and tell them that you have or may have COVID-19. This will help the provider's office take steps to protect you and others.

Resuming a Daily Routine

Contact your doctor or the local health department for more information on when you can discontinue home isolation. The CDC also offers guidelines on **when it is safe to be around others**. Even when you are feeling better, continue to protect yourself and others:

- **Minimize contact with others, including pets.**
- **Wear a mask or face covering.**
- **6′ Practice safe distancing.**
- **Wash your hands often, and sanitize items and surfaces that are touched often with an EPA-approved disinfectant*.**

Take Care of Yourself

Notice and accept how you feel.
Feelings of stress, anger, worry, sadness, etc., are to be expected. People respond to pressure differently, so be patient with yourself and others.

Care for your body.
Eat regular meals, stay hydrated, take medications and vitamins regularly, get enough sleep, and stay active.

Give and receive support from loved ones.
Remind your family and friends to eat, drink, and sleep. Watch them for signs of stress. Encourage each other, and be ready to listen to those who need to talk. Allow them to do the same for you.

Actively manage stress.
Have a plan to manage your stress. Stay active, meditate, pray, or talk to a friend or therapist. Do what works best for you before the stress becomes harder to manage.

Limit media exposure.
While it's important to stay informed, too much time with worrisome material will increase your stress. Choose a few sources of reliable information and set a time limit.

Avoid self-medicating.
During a crisis, it can be especially tempting to smoke, drink too much, or use other substances to deal with stress. Avoid coping mechanisms that can compromise your immune system. Give your body its best chance to be healthy.

Stay connected.
Call or use video chat to safely spend time together with family and friends. Isolation can magnify feelings of worry and anxiety, so it is important to connect with people who will support you during this time. We are all in this together.

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