



Guidance for People Who May Have an Increased Risk for Severe Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

About Novel Coronavirus

What is a novel coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that are common throughout the world. They cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to more serious illnesses like pneumonia. A novel coronavirus is a type of coronavirus that has not been previously seen in humans. Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) has been detected in thousands of people worldwide.

How serious is this virus and what are the range of symptoms?

Most people with COVID-19 will have mild symptoms. Symptoms can include fever, cough or shortness of breath.

Who is at higher risk for severe illness?

People who are older or may have underlying medical conditions, such as diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular disease, appear to have a higher risk of severe COVID-19. Children and young adults appear to be less affected.

What You Need to Know to Stay Healthy

What steps can I take to avoid getting COVID-19?

If you think you may have an increased risk for severe COVID-19, take the following steps to prepare and prevent getting infected:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve, not with your hands.
- Do not touch your face with unwashed hands.
- Stop shaking hands when you greet someone. Consider only using an elbow bump when greeting someone.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or disinfecting wipes.
- Encourage your household members and care providers to follow these healthy hygiene tips.
- Avoid nonessential travel to affected areas. Visit [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers) for the latest travel health notices.
- Make a list of medications you take regularly. Ask your health care provider if you can have a 90-day supply of all necessary medications.
- If you require home care, ask your provider about plans for what will be done if a COVID-19 outbreak occurs in your community. Plans should include how to provide care without interruptions.



- Ask your provider if you should have influenza or pneumococcal vaccines.
- If your primary doctor has an online “patient portal,” become familiar with using it, in case the practice is very busy during an outbreak.
- Create an emergency contact list.
- Identify people or social groups who can assist if you need extra help.
- Consider stocking up on extra food and important household supplies.
- Take steps to prevent social isolation, in case physical travel is restricted during an outbreak. Consider connecting with others using video chat applications like Skype or FaceTime.

What should I do if I become ill while COVID-19 is in my community?

- Call your regular health care provider for guidance. Do not go to a clinic or hospital without calling ahead. New York City residents without a health care provider or insurance can call NYC Health + Hospitals at 844-NYC-4NYC.
- Seek medical attention promptly if your illness is worsening (e.g., you develop difficulty breathing). You should still call ahead, so that providers may prepare for your arrival.

Helpful Resources

- If you are being harassed due to your race, nation of origin or other identities, you can report discrimination or harassment to the NYC Commission on Human Rights by calling **311**.
- If you are experiencing stress or feel anxious, contact NYC Well at 888-NYC-WELL (888-692-9355) or text WELL to 65173. NYC Well is a confidential help line that is staffed 24/7 by trained counselors who can provide brief supportive therapy, crisis counseling, and connections to behavioral health treatment, in more than 200 languages.
- If you need help with other support services, contact the NYC Department for the Aging’s Aging Connect at 212-AGING-NYC or 212-244-6469 to speak with an aging specialist.