

Caring for Someone Sick at Home

Advice for caregivers

If you are caring for someone with COVID-19 at home or in a non-healthcare setting, follow this advice to protect yourself and others. Learn what to do when someone has [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, or when someone has been diagnosed with the virus. This information also should be followed when caring for people who have tested positive but are not showing symptoms.

**Note: [Older adults and people of any age with serious underlying medical conditions](#) are at higher risk for developing more severe illness from COVID-19. People at higher risk of severe illness should call their doctor as soon as symptoms start.*

Provide support and help cover basic needs

- Help the person who is sick follow their doctor's instructions for care and medicine.
 - For *most* people, symptoms last a few days, and people usually feel better after a week.
- See if over-the-counter medicines for fever help the person feel better.
- Make sure the person who is sick drinks a lot of fluids and rests.
- Help them with grocery shopping, filling prescriptions, and getting other items they may need. Consider having the items delivered through a delivery service, if possible.
- Take care of their pet(s), and limit contact between the person who is sick and their pet(s) when possible.

Watch for warning signs

- Have their doctor's phone number on hand.
- [Use CDC's self-checker tool](#) to help you make decisions about seeking appropriate medical care.
- Call their doctor if the person keeps getting sicker. For medical emergencies, call 911 and tell the dispatcher that the person has or might have COVID-19.

When to Seek Emergency Medical Attention

Look for **emergency warning signs*** for COVID-19. If someone is showing any of these signs, **seek emergency medical care immediately:**

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion
- Inability to wake or stay awake
- 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.

Call 911 or call ahead to your local emergency facility: Notify the operator that you are seeking care for someone who has or may have COVID-19.

Protect yourself when caring for someone who is sick

Limit contact

COVID-19 spreads between people who are in close contact (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets, created when someone talks, coughs or sneezes.

- The **caregiver**, when possible, **should not be someone who is at [higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19](#)**.
- **If possible, have the person who is sick use a separate bedroom and bathroom.** If possible, have the person who is sick stay in their own “sick room” or area and away from others. Try to stay at least 6 feet away from the sick person.
- **Shared space:** If you have to share space, make sure the room has good air flow.
 - Open the window to increase air circulation.
 - Improving ventilation helps remove respiratory droplets from the air.
- **Avoid having visitors.** Avoid having any unnecessary visitors, especially visits by [people who are at higher risk for severe illness](#).

Eat in separate rooms or areas

- **Stay separated:** The person who is sick should eat (or be fed) in their room, if possible.
- **Wash dishes and utensils using gloves and hot water:** Handle any dishes, cups/glasses, or silverware used by the person who is sick with gloves. Wash them with soap and hot water or in a dishwasher.
- [Clean hands](#) after taking off gloves or handling used items.

Avoid sharing personal items

- **Do not share:** Do not share dishes, cups/glasses, silverware, towels, bedding, or electronics (like a cell phone) with the person who is sick.

When to wear a cloth face cover or gloves

Sick person:

- The person who is sick should wear a [cloth face covering](#) when they are around other people at home and out (including before they enter a doctor’s office).
- The cloth face covering helps prevent a person who is sick from spreading the virus to others. It keeps respiratory droplets contained and from reaching other people.
- Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is not able to remove the covering without help.

Caregiver:

- Wear gloves when you touch or have contact with the sick person’s blood, stool, or body fluids, such as saliva, mucus, vomit, and urine. Throw out gloves into a lined trash can and wash hands right away.
- The caregiver should ask the sick person to put on a [cloth face covering](#) before entering the room.
- The caregiver may also wear a [cloth face covering](#) when caring for a person who is sick.
 - To prevent getting sick, make sure you practice [everyday preventive actions](#): clean hands often; avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands; and frequently clean and disinfect surfaces.

Note: During the COVID-19 pandemic, medical grade facemasks are reserved for healthcare workers and some first responders. You may need to make a cloth face covering using a scarf or bandana. [Learn more here.](#)

Clean your hands often

- **Wash hands:** Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Tell everyone in the home to do the same, especially after being near the person who is sick.
- **Hand sanitizer:** 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.
- **Hands off:** Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

[Handwashing tips](#)

Clean and then disinfect

Around the house

- **Clean and disinfect “high-touch” surfaces and items every day:** This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, toilets, faucets, sinks, and electronics.
- Clean the area or item with **soap and water** if it is dirty. **Then, use a household disinfectant.**
 - Be sure to **follow the instructions on the label** to ensure safe and effective use of the product. Many products recommend keeping the surface wet for several minutes to kill germs. Many also recommend wearing gloves, making sure you have good air flow, and wiping or rinsing off the product after use.
 - Most household disinfectants should be effective. **A list of EPA-registered disinfectants can be found [hereexternal icon.](#)**
 - **To clean electronics,** follow the manufacturer’s instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products. If those directions are not available, use alcohol-based wipes or spray containing at least 70% alcohol.
 - **Learn more [here.](#)**

Bedroom and Bathroom

- **If you are using a separate bedroom and bathroom:** Only clean the area around the person who is sick when needed, such as when the area is soiled. This will help limit your contact with the sick person.
 - If they feel up to it, the person who is sick can clean their own space. Give the person who is sick **personal cleaning supplies** such as tissues, paper towels, cleaners, and [EPA-registered disinfectantsexternal icon.](#)
- **If sharing a bathroom:** The person who is sick should clean and then disinfect after each use. If this is not possible, wear a cloth face covering and wait as long as possible after the sick person has used the bathroom before coming in to clean and use the bathroom.

Wash and dry laundry

- Do not shake dirty laundry.
- Wear disposable gloves while handling dirty laundry.
- Dirty laundry from a person who is sick can be washed with other people’s items.
- Wash items according to the label instructions. Use the warmest water setting you can.
- Remove gloves, and wash hands right away.
- Dry laundry, on hot if possible, completely.
- Wash hands after putting clothes in the dryer.
- Clean and disinfect clothes hampers. Wash hands afterwards.

Use lined trash can

- Place used disposable gloves and other contaminated items in a lined trash can.
- Use gloves when removing garbage bags, and handling and disposing of trash. Wash hands afterwards.
- Place all used disposable gloves, facemasks, and other contaminated items in a lined trash can.
- If possible, dedicate a lined trash can for the person who is sick.

Track your own health

- Caregivers should stay home and monitor their health for COVID-19 symptoms while caring for the person who is sick. They should also continue to stay home after care is complete. Caregivers can leave their home 14 days after their last close contact with the person who is sick (based on the time it takes to develop illness), or 14 days after the person who is sick meets the [criteria to end home isolation](#).
 - [Symptoms](#) include fever, cough, and shortness of breath but other symptoms may be present as well. Trouble breathing is a more serious warning sign that you need medical attention.
- [Use CDC's self-checker tool](#) to help you make decisions about seeking appropriate medical care.
- **If you are having trouble breathing, call 911.**
 - Call your doctor or emergency room and tell them your symptoms before going in. They will tell you what to do.

When it's Safe to be Around Others After Being Sick with COVID-19

Deciding when it is safe to be around others is different for different situations. Find out when someone who is sick can [safely end home isolation](#).

For ALL people

- When leaving the home, **keep a distance of 6 feet from others** and wear a [cloth face covering](#) when around other people.

In all cases, **follow the guidance of your doctor and local health department. The decision to stop home isolation should be made in consultation with your healthcare provider and state and local health departments. Some people, for example those with conditions that [weaken their immune system](#), might continue to shed virus even after they recover.