I’ve been exposed to COVID-19. Now what?

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in people and many species of animals. In rare cases, animal coronaviruses can infect people and then spread from person to person. This is the case with COVID-19. Symptoms can range from mild to severe respiratory illness with fever, cough, and difficulty breathing. In some cases, symptoms do not appear—but the virus can still be spread to others.


How is COVID-19 spread?

The virus that causes COVID-19 is spread from person to person between people who are in close contact with one another. In general, the more closely a person interacts with others and the longer that interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread. The virus can spread through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby, or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. It’s also possible for a person to get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it, and then touching their mouth, nose, or eyes.


What should I do if I had close contact with someone with COVID-19?

If you have been within six feet of someone (for more than 15 minutes) who has a known, suspected, or possible COVID-19 infection take the following steps:

- Stay at home until 14 days after the last exposure, and practice strict social distancing (maintain at least six feet of space from others at all times).
- Monitor your symptoms by checking your temperature twice a day. Watch for fever, cough, or shortness of breath.
- Avoid contact with people who are at higher risk for severe illness (unless they live in the same home and had same exposure).

There are different factors to consider for determining a potential exposure to a person with COVID-19 who has symptoms versus one who does not. See the source below for more information.

What if I get sick?

What should I do if I have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19 and I get sick?

CDC recommends:

- Staying at home, except to get medical care.
- Separating yourself from other people and pets in your home.
- Monitoring your symptoms.
- Calling ahead before visiting your doctor.
- Wearing a cloth covering over your nose and mouth if you are sick.
- Covering your coughs and sneezes.
- Cleaning your hands often.
- Avoiding sharing personal household items.
- Clean all “high-touch” surfaces daily.


When should I seek medical attention?

Most people who get COVID-19 have mild symptoms and can recover at home. If you develop emergency warning signs for COVID-19, get medical attention immediately. Emergency warning signs include*:

- Trouble breathing
- Continued pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion
- Not able to wake up or stay awake
- Lips or face turning blue

*This list is not all inclusive. Please consult your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning.

Call 911 if you have a medical emergency. Notify the operator that you have, or think you might have, COVID-19. If possible, put on a cloth face covering before medical help arrives.


I have been told to isolate at home. When is it safe to end home isolation?

If you have COVID-19 and have symptoms, you may end home isolation under the following conditions:

- At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared, and
- At least 24 hours have passed since your fever ended, without the use of fever-reducing medicines, and
- Other symptoms have improved.