

Coronavirus: Safety and Readiness Tips for You



The American Red Cross is closely monitoring the outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and following the latest guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

We know this is a stressful time and people want to know what they can do right now to protect themselves and their families. That's why the Red Cross is highlighting some everyday health and preparedness steps that people in the U.S. can take now.

There are also special recommendations for people who may be at a higher risk which you can find below.

LIMIT THE SPREAD OF GERMS AND PREVENT INFECTION

The Red Cross recommends following common sense steps to help prevent the spread of any respiratory virus.

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, and throw the tissue away after use. If a tissue isn't available, cough or sneeze into your elbow or sleeve, not your hands.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- Practice other good health habits. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids and eat nutritious food.
- Clean and disinfect doorknobs, switches, handles, computers, telephones, bedside tables, bathroom sinks, toilets, counters, toys and other surfaces that are commonly touched around the home or workplace.
- To the extent possible, avoid touching commonly used surfaces in public places like elevator buttons, door handles and handrails and avoid handshaking with people. Use a tissue or your sleeve to cover your hand or finger if you must touch something.
- Follow the CDC's recommendations for using a facemask.

CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.

Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others.

The use of facemasks is also crucial for health workers and people who are taking care of someone in close settings (at home or in a health care facility).

GET YOUR HOUSEHOLD READY

There are things you can do right now to be ready for any emergency, and many of these same tips will help you prepare as the coronavirus situation continues to evolve in the U.S.

- Have a supply of food staples and household supplies like laundry detergent and bathroom items, and diapers if you have small children.
- Check to make sure you have at least a 30-day supply of your prescription medications, and have other health supplies on hand, including pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough and cold medicines, fluids with electrolytes and vitamins.
- Know how your local public health agency will share information in your community and stay informed. Find more information [here](#).
- Learn how your children's school or daycare, and your workplace will handle a possible outbreak. Create a plan in the event of any closings, event cancellations or postponements.
- If you care for older adults or children, plan and prepare for caring for them, should they or you become sick.

- Help family members and neighbors get prepared and share the safety messaging with those who may not have access to it.

According to the CDC, patients with COVID-19 have reportedly had mild to severe respiratory illness. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure and include fever, cough and shortness of breath. Call your healthcare professional if you develop symptoms and have been in close contact with a person known to have the disease or if you have recently traveled from an area with widespread or ongoing community spread of the disease.

WHO IS AT A HIGHER RISK?

COVID-19 is a new disease, which means scientists and public health experts are still learning how it spreads, the severity of illness it causes and to what extent it may spread in the U.S.

Early information shows that some people are at higher risk of getting very sick from this virus. This includes older adults and people who have serious chronic medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes and lung disease.

If you are at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19 because of your age or a serious medical condition, it is extra important for you to take actions to avoid getting sick.

- Take everyday precautions to keep space between yourself and others.
- When you go out in public, keep away from others who are sick, limit close contact and wash your hands often.
- Avoid crowds as much as possible.
- Stock up on supplies.
- Contact your healthcare provider to ask about obtaining extra necessary medications to have on hand in case there is an outbreak of COVID-19 in your community and you need to stay home for a prolonged period of time.
- If you cannot get extra medications, consider using a mail-order option.
- Be sure you have over-the-counter medicines and medical supplies (tissues, etc.) to treat fever and other symptoms. Most people will be able to recover from COVID-19 at home.
- Have enough household items and groceries on hand so that you will be prepared to stay at home for a period of time.

During a COVID-19 outbreak in your community, stay home as much as possible.