

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance for Caregivers

Summary of May 18, 2021 changes

- Updated information for [fully vaccinated](#) individuals to align with CDC recommendations.

Plan

If you are caring for someone who is at higher risk of getting very sick from COVID-19, you should:

- Contact their healthcare provider to ask about getting extra necessary medications to have on hand in case you and your loved one need to stay home for a prolonged period of time.
- If you cannot get extra medications, consider using mail-order for medications.
- Be sure you have over-the-counter medicines and medical supplies (tissues, etc.) to treat fever and other symptoms.
- Ensure you have enough medical supplies (oxygen, incontinence, dialysis, wound care) and create a back-up plan for getting more.
- Make sure your loved one has non-perishable food items on hand.
- Determine who can care for your loved one if you become sick. Stay in touch with others by phone or email. You may need to ask for help from friends, family, neighbors, community health workers, etc.
- Create an emergency contact list.

Take Precautions

- You and your loved one should both wear a cloth face covering. A cloth face covering is anything that completely covers your mouth and nose, and fits securely on the sides of your face and under your chin. It should be made of two or more layers of tightly woven fabric with ties or straps that go around your head or behind your ears. (See more information on face coverings at the end of this section.)
- Keep your care environment clean. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces (for example tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, toilets, faucets, sinks, and cell phones.) See EPA-registered disinfectants that kill COVID-19.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing, or having been in a public place.
- If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your face, nose, and eyes.

- To the extent possible, avoid touching high-touch surfaces in public places – elevator buttons, door handles, handrails, handshaking with people, etc. Use a tissue or your sleeve to cover your hand or finger if you must touch something.
- If more food is needed, consider ways of getting food brought to the house through family, social, or commercial networks.

Monitor

- Pay attention for potential COVID-19 symptoms including, fever, cough, and shortness of breath. If you feel like you are developing symptoms, call your doctor.
- If your loved one develops emergency warning signs for COVID-19 get medical attention immediately. In adults, emergency warning signs:
 - Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
 - Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
 - New confusion or inability to arouse
 - Bluish lips or face

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

If Your Loved One Has a Respiratory Infection

- If your loved one has symptoms, follow CDC's recommendation in [Caring for Someone Sick at Home](#) for household members, intimate partners, and caregivers in a nonhealthcare setting of a patient with symptomatic laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 or a patient under investigation.
- Make sure the space where you are providing care has good air flow, such as an air conditioner or an open window, weather permitting.
- Limit contact and keep as far away from your loved one as you can and still deliver care.
 - Minimize the transfer of objects between you and your loved one by offering a tray of food rather than handing off and collecting individual items.
 - Hand your loved one a thermometer rather than placing it in their mouth.
 - When talking to them, stand six feet away.
- During the period of illness, if feasible, keep your loved one in one bedroom and, if able, dedicate a bathroom for exclusive use by them.
- When cleaning their room, be sure to disinfect and scrub down all surfaces before allowing other household members to use the room again.

Consult with your local health jurisdiction to determine the best option for your individual circumstances regarding isolation and quarantine. See the [When You're Fully Vaccinated Section](#) below for information on quarantine for fully vaccinated individuals.

When You've Been Fully Vaccinated

People are considered fully vaccinated:

- 2 weeks after their second dose in a 2-dose series, like the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or
- 2 weeks after a single-dose vaccine, like Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine.

COVID-19 vaccines must be authorized for emergency use, licensed, or otherwise approved by the FDA; or listed for emergency use or otherwise approved by the World Health Organization. If it has been less than 2 weeks since your final dose, or if you still need to get your second dose, you are NOT fully protected. Keep taking all [prevention measures](#) until you are fully vaccinated.

Per [CDC recommendations](#), people who are fully vaccinated no longer need to wear face coverings or physically distance outdoors or indoors, except in these settings:

- Health care settings like hospitals, long-term care, or doctor's offices
- Correctional facilities
- Homeless shelters
- Schools

The [federal order](#) requiring masks on public transportation still applies.

Fully vaccinated individuals do not need to quarantine or get tested if identified as a close contact of someone who has COVID-19 unless symptomatic. If symptoms develop, follow [quarantine recommendations](#) and [get tested](#). Residents or employees of group settings, like a correctional or detention facility or group home, should quarantine and get tested if identified as a close contact regardless of vaccination status.

See the [DOH guidance on masks and face coverings](#) for complete information on the current mandates and health orders in place.

Refer to L&I for current information on face covering requirements in the workplace. Businesses retain the right to require masks in their establishments for staff and/or customers, and to ask for proof of vaccination.

More Information on Masks

More protective coverings, such as masks or respirators may be required in a workplace. Refer to L&I for current information on face covering requirements in the workplace. A face shield with a drape can be used by people with developmental, behavioral, or medical conditions that prevent them from wearing a face covering. Face shields may also be used by children in childcare, day camp, and K-12 settings.

Guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [recommends strategies](#) to improve mask fitting to more effectively slow the spread of COVID-19. These strategies include wearing a cloth mask over a medical procedure mask, knotting the ear loops of a medical procedure mask, using a mask fitter, or using a nylon covering over a mask. In addition, DOH does not recommend the use of masks with exhalation valves or vents, or single layer bandanas and gaiters. (Respirators with exhalation valves are okay when used in accordance with guidance published by DOH and [L&I](#).) If you are not fully vaccinated, it is important to wear a mask in all public settings combined with continued implementation of effective public health measures such as vaccination, physical distancing, hand hygiene, and isolation and quarantine.

More COVID-19 Information and Resources

Stay up-to-date on the [current COVID-19 situation in Washington](#), [Governor Inslee's proclamations](#), [symptoms](#), [how it spreads](#), and [how and when people should get tested](#). See our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for more information.

A person's race/ethnicity or nationality does not, itself, put them at greater risk of COVID-19. However, data are revealing that communities of color are being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. This is due to the effects of racism, and in particular, structural racism, that leaves some groups with fewer opportunities to protect themselves and their communities. [Stigma will not help to fight the illness](#). Share only accurate information to keep rumors and misinformation from spreading.

- [WA State Department of Health 2019 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [WA State Coronavirus Response \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Find Your Local Health Department or District](#)
- [CDC Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Stigma Reduction Resources](#)

Have more questions about COVID-19? Call our hotline: **1-800-525-0127**, Monday – Friday, 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., Have more questions? Call our COVID-19 Information hotline: 1-800-525-0127 Monday – 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., Tuesday – Sunday and observed state holidays, 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. For interpretative services, press # when they answer and say your language. For questions about your own health, COVID-19 testing, or testing results, please contact a health care provider.

To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 ([Washington Relay](#)) or email civil.rights@doh.wa.gov.