

# Protecting Yourself and Others From COVID-19

Talk to your  
pharmacist or other  
trusted health care  
professional if you  
have any questions or  
need more information  
about COVID-19  
vaccines.

## References

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. COVID Data Tracker. Updated May 18, 2023. Accessed May 22, 2023. <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#datatracker-home>
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Trends in United States COVID-19 hospitalizations, deaths, and emergency department (ED) visits by geographic area. COVID Data Tracker. Updated May 18, 2023. Accessed May 22, 2023. [https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#trends-weeklydeaths\\_select\\_00](https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#trends-weeklydeaths_select_00)
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Long COVID or post-COVID conditions. Updated December 16, 2022. Accessed May 22, 2023. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/long-term-effects/>
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines. Updated May 11, 2023. Accessed May 22, 2023. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html>
5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. COVID-19: Improving ventilation in your home. Updated April 13, 2023. Accessed April 18, 2024. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/Improving-Ventilation-Home.html>

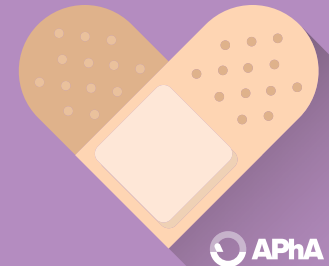


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The federal declaration of a Public Health Emergency for COVID-19 in the United States ended on May 11, 2023. However, SARS-CoV-2 virus continues to circulate, and people continue to be hospitalized and die from COVID-19 disease. We cannot just forget about COVID-19. Many people continue to be harmed by COVID-19—particularly people who are older, are immunocompromised, have certain disabilities, or have underlying health conditions.

During the week that the emergency declaration ended, more than 9,000 people in the United States were hospitalized with COVID-19 disease, and more than 200 people died.<sup>1,2</sup> Some people develop ongoing health problems (known as “Long COVID”) that can last weeks, months, or years.<sup>3</sup>

The SARS-CoV-2 virus spreads when an infected person breathes, coughs, or sneezes out respiratory droplets and virus particles. As we adjust to a lower level of COVID-19, we can rely on many of the prevention measures we took during the pandemic to protect us from getting and spreading the SARS-CoV-2 virus (as well as other respiratory viruses).

## Actions to Help Prevent COVID-19

**Stay Up to Date With COVID-19 Vaccines.** Staying up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations significantly lowers the risk of getting very sick, being hospitalized, or dying from COVID-19 disease. As of May 2023, people 6 years of age and older are considered up to date after they get one dose of the updated Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine.<sup>4</sup>

People 65 years of age and older—and people who are moderately or severely immunocompromised—are eligible for an additional dose of updated COVID-19 vaccine.

The definition of “up to date” differs for some groups (for example, children 6 months to 5 years of age). For the latest information and recommendations on being up to date, visit [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html).

**Wash Your Hands.** Regular handwashing is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of viruses like SARS-CoV-2. People touch their eyes, nose, and mouth many times during the day without realizing it. If you have virus particles on your hands, the virus can get into your body and make you sick.

Wash your hands with soap and running water. Lather and scrub all parts of your hands for at least 20 seconds. Then rinse your hands well under running water. Dry them using a clean towel or an air dryer. Need a timer? Hum the “Happy Birthday” song twice.

If soap and water are not readily available, the next best thing is to use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Put enough sanitizer on your hands to cover all surfaces and rub your hands together for about 20 seconds, until they feel dry. Wash your hands with soap and water as soon as you can.

**Improve Ventilation in Your Home.** It can be hard to tell if someone in your home (either a family member or a visitor) has COVID-19 or other respiratory illness (like the flu). Getting fresh air into your home, filtering the air that is there, and improving airflow all can help to reduce virus particles in your home and keep COVID-19 from spreading.<sup>5</sup>

Open your doors and windows, turn on fans, and use air filters. The CDC provides many recommendations, including an interactive home ventilation tool at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/interactive-ventilation-tool.html>.

## Actions to Help Prevent COVID-19 When the Hospital Admission Level Is Medium or High

When your local COVID-19 hospital admission level is medium or high, some additional prevention actions can help protect people who are at high risk of getting very sick, being hospitalized, or dying from COVID-19.

**Wear a High-Quality Mask or Respirator.** If you are at high risk, wear a high-quality mask or respirator (such as N95) when indoors in public. If you are not at high risk but have a family member or friends who are, consider wearing a high-quality mask when you are indoors with them.

Masks help contain droplets and particles that you breathe, cough, or sneeze out. Respirators provide higher protection than masks because they fit more closely on the face. Respirators block droplets and particles you breathe, cough, or sneeze out, so you do not spread germs to others. When wearing a mask or respirator, be sure that it fits closely to your face and covers both your nose and mouth.

**Consider Self-Testing.** If you live with or will visit someone who is at high risk, consider self-testing with a rapid COVID-19 test (also called “home tests” or “at-home tests”) to make sure you don’t have a current infection. These tests provide results in 10 to 15 minutes, so it is best to take the test as close as possible to the time you will be with the at-risk person.

