

## Stay Home, New Yorkers: What You Need to Know Now About COVID-19

There is widespread community transmission of COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease 2019) happening in New York City. COVID-19 is a respiratory illness (which affects breathing) caused by a new coronavirus. Symptoms can range from mild, such as a sore throat, to severe, such as pneumonia. Most people will not need medical attention for their symptoms. Together we can slow the spread and protect those at higher risk of severe illness and our health care workers from getting sick.

**Community transmission means that COVID-19 is circulating in NYC and that we should act as if we are all exposed. If you are sick, you must stay home.** All New Yorkers must monitor their health carefully at this time. Only seek health care if you are very sick. We need to make sure people with severe illness will be able to stay in a hospital or intensive care unit if they need to. Even if you are not sick, stay home as much as you can: work from home, study from home and avoid all unnecessary interactions and events.

### How does COVID-19 spread?

- The virus can spread to people who are in close contact (within about 6 feet) with an infected person when that person coughs or sneezes.
- The virus is spreading between people with no link to travel or to another positive case.
- Scientists disagree on how long COVID-19 lives on surfaces, but it can live on surfaces that people frequently touch. The virus can then be spread if someone touches their eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Public health officials are still learning about the virus that causes COVID-19, but it is believed that people who are experiencing symptoms (coughing and sneezing) are most likely to transmit the virus to others.

### Who is most at risk for COVID-19?

- People who are at most risk for severe illness are people who are over 50 years old or who have other health conditions, including chronic lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, cancer or a weakened immune system.
- People with regular close contact with someone who has or could have COVID-19 are also at higher risk. This includes people who live in the same home, caretakers who work in the home or sexual partners.

### What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

- Commonly reported symptoms include:
  - Fever (temperature over 100.4 degrees F or 38 degrees C)
  - Cough
  - Shortness of breath (difficulty breathing)
  - Sore throat
- If you have any of these symptoms, and they are not due to a preexisting health condition like asthma or emphysema, you may have COVID-19 and you must stay home.

### **Who should get tested for COVID-19?**

- Testing should only be used for people who need to be hospitalized for severe illness like pneumonia. This protects health care workers and may affect treatment options.
- At this point, if you have symptoms, assume that you have COVID-19. A positive test will not change what a doctor tells you to do to get better. The best course of action is to stay at home.
- If you are only mildly ill, you can save the life of another New Yorker by staying home to ensure health care resources go to those who need them the most. **Take care of others by staying home.**

### **What should I do if I get sick with COVID-19 symptoms?**

- **If you have mild to moderate symptoms, stay home. You should not seek medical care or try to get tested.** By staying home, you reduce the possibility of transmission to others, including health care workers who are needed to care for the more seriously ill.
- If you are over 50 years old or have chronic conditions, consult your doctor. They may want to monitor you more closely.
- If your symptoms do not go away or get worse after three to four days, consult with your doctor.
- Stay home for at least seven days after your symptoms started. Make sure that you have been fever-free for three days without the use of fever-reducing drugs, such as Tylenol and ibuprofen. Also, make sure that your cough and sore throat are better before you go back to your routine. If you never had a fever, stay at home for at least three days after your symptoms start improving.
- If you go out to see your doctor, wear a face mask if available. If possible, take a private car, sit in the back seat and roll down the window.
- If you have more severe symptoms, such as difficulty breathing and very high fever, go to an emergency department. Call **911** if you need help right away.

### **What should I do if I'm sick at home? Assume you have COVID-19!**

- Do not leave your home except to get medical care or to address other essential needs, such as getting groceries.
- Do not go to school or to work.
- Do not take public transportation. Do not use ride shares or taxis.
- Separate yourself from others in your home, as much as possible. Stay in a different room. Use a separate bathroom if available. If you share a bathroom, disinfect frequently touched surfaces after each use.
- Wear a face mask if available when you need to be in areas with others.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when sneezing or coughing. Do not use your hands to cover your sneeze or cough. Immediately throw out tissues and wash your hands afterward.
- Clean surfaces that are frequently touched, such as counters, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures and phones. Clean them after each use or at least once every day. Use a household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Do not share personal household items, such as glasses, cups, eating utensils and towels.
- Do not have visitors come to your home.

**I was confirmed to have COVID-19 or I was sick and may have had COVID-19. How long do I have to stay home?**

- If you had or may have had COVID-19, stay home for seven days after your symptoms started, and for three days after your fever has stopped without the use of fever-reducing drugs, such as Tylenol and ibuprofen, and your cough or sore throat symptoms have improved.
- If you never had a fever, stay at home for at least three days since your symptoms started improving.

**How can I protect myself and others from COVID-19?**

- Avoid all unnecessary events, travel or interactions. Stay at home as much as you can.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when sneezing or coughing. Do not use your hands.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Do not shake hands. Instead, wave or elbow bump.
- Monitor your health more closely than usual for cold or flu symptoms.
- Create more personal space between yourself and others. This is called social distancing.

**How do I practice social (physical) distancing?**

- Stay home as much as possible.
- Create more physical space between yourself and others.
- Keep at least 6 feet between yourself and others, whenever possible.
- Do not gather in large crowds.
- Work from home, if possible.
- Avoid all nonessential travel.
- Avoid all nonessential social interactions.

**What can I do to help other New Yorkers?**

- If you feel sick, stay home.
- If you are not feeling sick, stay home as much as possible and practice social (physical) distancing.
- Do not seek a COVID-19 test unless you are sick and do not feel better after three to four days. If you have mild or moderate symptoms, do not seek health care. This will let New Yorkers who are more sick access the care that they need.
- Do not hoard face masks. Our health care providers need face masks to stay healthy and to care for the most critically ill.

**For more information and support:**

- For real-time updates, text "COVID" to 692-692. Messages and data rates may apply.
- Visit [nyc.gov/coronavirus](https://nyc.gov/coronavirus) for additional resources and information.
- If you need a provider, NYC Health and Hospitals provides care to all New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status, insurance status or ability to pay. Call 844-NYC-4NYC (844-692-4692) or **311**.
- If you are feeling anxious, stressed or overwhelmed, connect with trained counselors at NYC Well, the City's confidential helpline. Call 888-NYC-WELL (888-692-9355), text "WELL" to 65173. Or chat online at [nyc.gov/nycwell](https://nyc.gov/nycwell).