

## **Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19): Community COVID-19 Guidance**

This document provides updated recommendations for the public to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the community. This guidance is **not** intended for use in healthcare settings, correctional facilities, or homeless shelters. For guidance and resource links specific to these settings, visit [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance).

### **How to protect yourself and others**

- DC Health recommends a risk-based approach when choosing which COVID-19 prevention measures to use. Some recommendations vary based upon the current **COVID-19 Hospital Admission Level**<sup>1</sup>.
- Individuals at higher risk for severe COVID-19 (and those who live with or visit them) should consider using more COVID-19 prevention measures.
- Higher risk individuals include those who are:
  - Unvaccinated (including all children under 6 months), partially vaccinated, or not up to date on their COVID-19 vaccine
  - Immunocompromised or who have other health conditions that put them at higher risk for severe COVID-19
  - Older than 65 years old
  - Pregnant or recently pregnant
- People who are unsure of their individual risk should discuss their concerns with a healthcare professional.

### **COVID-19 vaccination**

- Staying **up to date**<sup>2</sup> on your COVID-19 vaccine is the best way to protect yourself and others.
  - People who are up to date on their COVID-19 vaccine have lower risk of severe illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19 compared to people who are unvaccinated or who have only received the primary series.
  - The vaccine is widely available and free.
- **A person is considered up to date if they have had all recommended doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, including booster doses.**
  - Everyone 6 months and older is currently eligible to be vaccinated, **including an updated (bivalent) booster dose**<sup>3</sup> for most people.
  - Be sure to check the CDC's website regularly for updated COVID-19 vaccine recommendations: [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html).
  - Find out more about getting the COVID-19 vaccine or booster shot in DC at [coronavirus.dc.gov/vaccine](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/vaccine).

### **Stay home when sick.**

- People with symptoms of COVID-19 or another contagious illness should stay home.
  - Symptoms of COVID-19 include: fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore

<sup>1</sup> **COVID-19 Hospital Admission level**- a tool created by the CDC to help communities and individuals decide what prevention steps to take based on the COVID-19 level in their area. There are 3 levels: **LOW**, **MEDIUM**, and **HIGH**. When COVID-19 Hospital Admission levels are **LOW**, the risk of catching and spreading COVID-19 is lower for everyone. To look up current COVID-19 Hospital Admission levels for DC and other areas of the U.S., see [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html)

<sup>2</sup> For detailed information about staying up to date on your COVID-19 vaccine, see [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html).

<sup>3</sup> Monovalent (original) mRNA COVID-19 vaccines are no longer recommended for use in the United States.

throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea.

- Anyone who has symptoms of COVID-19 or who has a positive COVID-19 test should follow DC Health's *Guidance for Isolation: People who Test Positive for COVID-19* at [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance).

### **Ventilation**

- Consider moving indoor activities outdoors.
- Keep indoor spaces well ventilated. Bring in fresh air by opening windows or doors as much as possible.
- People who are immunocompromised or at high risk for severe COVID-19 should avoid poorly ventilated or crowded indoor spaces.

### **Wash your hands**

- Handwashing is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of most common infections, including COVID-19.
- Wash for at least 20 seconds with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

### **Masks & respirators**

- Masks continue to be an important tool to prevent symptomatic and asymptomatic spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses. The main way respiratory viruses spread is through droplets expelled from an infected person's nose or mouth when they talk, cough, sneeze, or raise their voice. Masks and respirators provide a barrier between the wearer and the environment. This is called source control.
- **While no longer required in most settings, you should respect the choice of others who wish to wear a mask or respirator even when not required.**
- For the complete *Mask and Respirator Guidance*, visit [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance).

### **Physical distancing**

- The closer you get to someone with COVID-19 and the more time you spend together, the higher your risk of exposure.
- You can decrease your risk of getting exposed to COVID-19 by maintaining a distance of 6 feet from other people when indoors and avoiding crowded indoor settings.

### **COVID-19 testing**

- Get tested if you:
  - Have symptoms of COVID-19
  - Are exposed to someone with COVID-19 (Note: People who have recovered from COVID-19 in the prior 30 days and are asymptomatic do not need to test.)
- COVID-19 at-home test kits are available, easy to use, and produce rapid test results. Consider repeating the test if you test negative but continue to have symptoms.
- Early COVID-19 testing and diagnosis is especially important for those who are immunocompromised or at high risk for severe COVID-19, so that COVID-19 treatments (e.g., antiviral medications) can be started as soon as possible.
- If the **COVID-19 Hospital Admission level<sup>1</sup>** is **MEDIUM** or **HIGH**, consider self-testing before in-person interactions with people who are immunocompromised or at high risk for severe COVID-19.
- For more information about:
  - At-home testing, see [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/testing/self-testing.html](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/testing/self-testing.html)
  - Where to get a COVID-19 test in DC, see [testinglocator.cdc.gov/](https://testinglocator.cdc.gov/).

## **Activities**

- If you are somewhere where the **COVID-19 Hospital Admission level<sup>1</sup>** is **HIGH**, consider choosing safer activities.
  - Outdoor activities are safer than indoor activities.
  - Characteristics of higher risk activities may include settings where:
    - Masks need to be removed, such as for eating and drinking
    - There is close mingling of people from many different households
    - There is increased forced exhalation, like during workouts or singing
    - People need to talk louder, or yell, due to background noise level or music, which promotes increased droplet and small particle production
    - Indoor settings with poor ventilation

## **Have a COVID-19 action plan**

- No matter what the current COVID-19 Hospital Admission levels are, have a COVID-19 action plan. Your plan might include:
  - What precautions you will use to protect yourself and your family from exposure
  - What steps you will take if you or a member of your family is exposed or becomes sick with COVID-19.
  - Precautions you will ask others to take around you and your family (such as masking or testing before a visit). Share these aspects of your plan with those you frequently interact with like friends and extended family.
- **Having a personal COVID-19 action plan is especially important if you are immunocompromised or at high risk for severe COVID-19.**
- More information on building your personal COVID-19 plan can be found at [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/needs-extra-precautions/FS\\_COVID\\_Plan\\_FINAL.pdf](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/needs-extra-precautions/FS_COVID_Plan_FINAL.pdf)

The guidelines above will continue to be updated. Please visit [coronavirus.dc.gov](https://coronavirus.dc.gov) for the most updated information.