

COVID-19: Reducing Risk

Keeping Safe & Preventing Spread

Which situations are riskier?

Understanding how the COVID-19 virus is spread is important. It will help you to assess your risk and take steps to protect yourself in different situations.

The virus spreads from person to person through respiratory droplets and tiny particles that are released into the air from the mouth and nose of a person who has COVID-19. These droplets/particles are then breathed in by other people or land on their eyes, nose, or mouth. A person's risk of getting infected goes up the closer they are to someone with COVID-19. This is especially true if the infected person is speaking, singing, coughing, shouting, sneezing, or breathing heavily. Their risk is also higher if they are in an enclosed space with poor air flow. This is because the droplets that have the virus can concentrate and spread in the air. They can even stay floating in the air for several hours after an infected person has left the room if there is poor air flow.



This is why masks are important. They lower the number of respiratory droplets people release into the air AND also the number that they breathe in.

It is also possible, but less common, for the virus to spread by touching a surface with droplets on it and then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.

There are certain places where COVID-19 spreads more easily

- **Closed spaces** with poor air flow.
- **Crowded places** with many people nearby
- **Close contact settings** especially where people are talking (or breathing heavily) close together

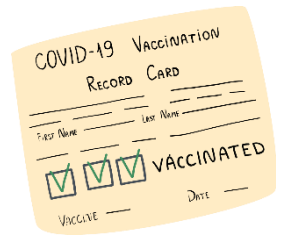
Knowing the level of spread in your area can help you decide what protective measures to take. Everyone needs to take extra precautions when the risk is high. When the risk is low, you can make decisions based on personal preference and comfort level. You should also consider your own level of risk and the level of risk to others in your household or workplace. Consider the following:

- Do you live with others who have a health condition that puts them at higher risk for severe illness from COVID?
- Do you live with anyone who is unvaccinated?
- Does anyone in your home work in a setting with vulnerable people who are at higher risk of severe illness from COVID?

To learn about the current situation in LA County, see [COVID-19 community risk level](#).

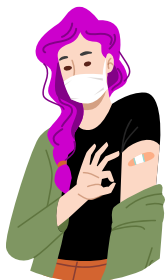
How to reduce the risks of COVID-19

- **Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines.** Get all recommended COVID-19 vaccine doses including booster(s). It is the best way to protect yourself from getting seriously ill and dying from COVID-19. The vaccine also reduces the risk of long COVID.
 - Use the [CDC's COVID-19 booster tool](#) to learn if and when you can get a booster. (See [Vaccination](#) below for more information).
- **Wear a mask that fits and filters well.** See ph.lacounty.gov/masks for more information on the types of masks and mask wearing rules and recommendations in Los Angeles County. If you are at [high risk for severe disease](#) or if you are around people who are at high risk, it is very important to wear a [highly effective mask](#) (such as a well-fitting N95, KN95, KF94, or double mask) indoors and in crowded outdoor places. Children under the age of 2 should not wear a mask.
- **Improve air flow.** Avoid indoor spaces with poor air flow as much as possible. Open windows and doors, use fans and portable air cleaners, run heating and air, and upgrade filters. (See CDC [Improving Ventilation in Your Home](#) and the California Department of Public Health flyer [Tips for Reducing Risk Indoors](#)).
- **Choose outdoor spaces** for social and fitness activities when possible.
- **Keep your distance.** Use two arms lengths as your guide (about 6 feet) for social distancing with people you don't live with.
- **Stay home when sick.** If you have [symptoms of COVID-19](#), stay away from others and get tested. To learn about symptoms and what to do if you are sick see ph.lacounty.gov/covidcare. If you are high risk for severe illness from COVID-19 and you test positive for COVID-19, ask for treatment right away, even if your symptoms are mild. See information for [people at higher risk](#) below.
- **Take a rapid COVID-19 viral test** before gathering indoors with others who are not in your household. This is especially important if you will be with people who are at high risk of severe illness. If you test positive, cancel your plans and isolate at home away from others even if you feel well. Visit ph.lacounty.gov/covidtests to learn more about when to get a test, self-tests, and understanding your test results.
- **Wash your hands and/or use hand sanitizer often** - especially after being in public spaces where surfaces are touched by many people. Avoid eating and touching your face with unwashed hands.
- **Be flexible.** Be willing to change your plans or leave if you find yourself in a place where COVID-19 can spread more easily. For example, indoors in a loud crowded restaurant with a lot of people who are not wearing masks.
- **Delay travel until you and the people you are traveling with are up to date with their vaccines.** Be sure to review and follow the CDC [domestic](#) and [international](#) travel guidance.



Vaccination

Vaccination is the best way to protect yourself from getting very sick from COVID-19, ending up in the hospital, or dying. It also lowers your risk of getting long-COVID-19. You need to get all recommended doses (including boosters) to get the best protection.



- If you are already up to date with your COVID-19 vaccines, encourage your family, friends, coworkers, and neighbors to get vaccinated, including their booster(s). Everyone ages 6 months and older should get vaccinated against COVID-19. For more information, visit ph.lacounty.gov/covidvaccineschedules.
- If you are not yet vaccinated or have not gotten a booster, consider getting vaccinated now. Vaccines are safe, effective, and free to everyone regardless of immigration status. Talk with your doctor about any concerns.

Vaccines are widely available across LA without an appointment. Visit ph.lacounty.gov/howtogetvaccinated to find a location near you. Call **1-833-540-0473** if you need help making an appointment, need transportation to a vaccination site, or are homebound. Phone lines are open from 8am to 8:30pm 7 days a week. Information is also available in many languages 24/7 by calling 2-1-1.

People at higher risk of serious illness

Some people are at [higher risk of becoming severely ill](#) and hospitalized if they get COVID-19. This includes people who are not vaccinated, older, or have certain medical conditions. If you are high-risk, you and the people you spend time with should be extra careful. Follow the steps listed [above](#) to reduce your risk and learn about [medicines to prevent or treat infection](#).

Remember to:

- **Stay up to date with your COVID-19 vaccines**
- **Learn about Evusheld – a medicine to prevent COVID-19 infection** if you are immunocompromised or can't get COVID-19 vaccination due to a medical condition.
- **Have a supply of COVID-19 tests or know where to get tested.** Test for COVID if you have symptoms or are a close contact.
- **Be prepared and have a COVID-19 treatment plan.** Medicines to treat COVID work best when they are given as soon as possible. Plan ahead to avoid delays.
- **Ask for treatment right away if you test positive,** even if your symptoms are mild.
- **Wear a highly protective mask** such as a well-fitting N95, KN95, KF95 or double mask when around others, especially indoors or in crowded outdoor spaces.

Medication to prevent and treat COVID-19

Medicine to PREVENT COVID-19 infection

Talk to your doctor if you cannot receive a COVID-19 vaccine for medical reasons or if your immune system is not strong enough to mount a response to the vaccine. If you are age 12 or over, you may be eligible for a medicine called Evusheld. Evusheld works to prevent you from getting COVID-19.

See ph.lacounty.gov/covidmedicines for more information.

Medicine to TREAT COVID-19 infection

If you get COVID-19, there are medicines that you can take that will help keep you out of the hospital. These medicines must be started within the first few days to be effective.

Be prepared and have a plan for getting COVID-19 treatment:

- **Your doctor can write a prescription** that you can fill at over 300 pharmacies in LA County. If you need intravenous treatment, your doctor can refer you to a treatment location.
- **You can use a [Test to Treat](#) program** which is available at many pharmacies and clinics.
- **You can use the Public Health Tele-Health Service** (available seven days a week from 8:00 am - 8:30 pm at 833-540-0473).



The Test to Treat and Tele-health services provide easy access to COVID-19 testing, evaluation, and, if you are eligible, oral COVID-19 treatment. See ph.lacounty.gov/covidmedicines for more information.

TIP! Make a list of all the medicines you are taking, including over the counter medicines and supplements. The doctor will need to know what medicines you are taking before they can prescribe treatment.