



Interim Guidance for **Persons Isolated at Home** with Confirmed Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

This guidance is designed to give you information about in-home isolation, preventing the spread of COVID-19 while you are sick, and when you can return to work or other normal activities.

IN-HOME ISOLATION

What is isolation and what directions should I follow?

Isolation means the separation of a person or group of people known or believed to be infected with a contagious disease. Isolation helps prevent other persons from becoming ill with this disease.

While you are being isolated at home, follow the prevention steps listed below until your local health department releases you from isolation and you can return to your normal activities.

Why am I being asked to isolate at home?

It is very important for you to stay isolated at home to prevent spreading COVID-19 to other people, particularly those persons who are most vulnerable to severe illness or death from this disease. Release from isolation will be determined by your local health department. People who are considered at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19 include: older adults and people with medical issues such as heart disease, diabetes, lung disease, cancer, or a weakened immune system.

How should I monitor my health during this time?

Symptoms of COVID-19 may include subjective or measured fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, muscle aches, fatigue, sore throat, headache, runny nose, chills, abdominal pain/discomfort, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.

You should monitor your symptoms closely and follow your healthcare provider's instructions to stay in communication with them. The following steps should be taken if you notice new or worsening symptoms:

- **Seek medical attention:** Seek prompt medical attention if your illness is worsening (e.g., difficulty breathing).
- **Call your doctor:** Before seeking care, call your healthcare provider and tell them that you have COVID-19. If you are instructed to present to the facility for care, request that a mask be made available if you don't already have one.
- **Wear a facemask when sick:** Request a facemask upon arrival at the facility and put on the facemask before you enter the facility. These steps will help the healthcare provider's office to keep other people in the office or waiting room from getting infected or exposed.
- **Alert health department:** Ask your healthcare provider to call your local health department.

Call 911 if you have a medical emergency: If you have a medical emergency and need to call 911, notify the dispatch personnel that you have COVID-19. If possible, put on a facemask before emergency medical services arrive. If you don't have a facemask, request one from emergency medical services when they arrive.

DISCONTINUING IN-HOME ISOLATION

When should I discontinue in-home isolation?

The following steps should be taken before you discontinue in-home isolation:

- **Symptoms have resolved:** Call your local health department under the following conditions:
 - At least 3 days (72 hours) after recovery, which is defined as:
 - No longer having a fever (measured when you are not taking fever-reducing medicine like Advil™, Tylenol™, or aspirin) AND
 - Significant improvement of your other symptoms, including not having a productive cough AND
 - At least 7 days after symptoms first appeared
- **If you tested positive for COVID-19, but did not have any symptoms:** Home isolation may be discontinued when at least seven days have passed since your first positive test result AND you have had no illness since receiving that test result
- **Talk to your local health department:** The decision to stop home isolation precautions will be made on a case-by-case basis by your local health department and in communication with your healthcare provider as needed. Your local health department may recommend that you be tested for COVID-19 before discontinuing home isolation. Wait for your local health department to tell you that it is safe to leave isolation.

- **For healthcare personnel:** There may be additional requirements for you to be cleared to return to work at your healthcare facility. Discontinuation of in-home isolation does NOT mean you are cleared to return to work.

CRITERIA FOR HEALTHCARE PERSONNEL RETURNING TO WORK

When can I go back to work in my healthcare facility?

- Processes for returning to work should be discussed with your employer after you have been cleared from isolation by your local health department.

If you were never tested for COVID-19 but have an alternate diagnosis (e.g., tested positive for influenza), criteria for return to work should be based on that diagnosis.

Return to Work Practices and Work Restrictions

Upon returning to work, healthcare personnel will:

- Wear a facemask at all times while in the healthcare facility until all symptoms have completely resolved or until 14 days after onset, whichever is longer.
- Be restricted from contact with severely immunocompromised patients (e.g., transplant, hematology-oncology) until 14 days after illness onset.
- Adhere to hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, cough etiquette in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) interim infection control guidance (e.g., cover nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, dispose of tissues in waste receptacles).
- Self-monitor for symptoms, and seek reevaluation from occupational health if respiratory symptoms recur or worsen

PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

What steps should I follow to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

If you are sick with COVID-19, follow the steps below to help prevent the disease from spreading to people in your home and community.

STAY HOME EXCEPT TO GET MEDICAL CARE

- **Stay home:** People who are mildly ill with COVID-19 can isolate at home during their illness. You should restrict activities outside your home, except for getting medical care. Avoid public areas.

- **Avoid public transportation:** Avoid using public transportation, ride-sharing, or taxis.

SEPARATE YOURSELF FROM OTHER PEOPLE AND ANIMALS IN YOUR HOME

- **Stay away from others:** As much as possible, you should stay in a specific room and away from other people in your home. Also, you should use a separate bathroom, if available.
- **Limit contact with pets & animals:** You should restrict contact with pets and other animals while you are sick with COVID-19, just like you would around other people. Although there have not been reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19, it is still recommended that people sick with COVID-19 limit contact with animals until more information is known about the virus.
- When possible, have another member of your household care for your animals while you are sick. If you are sick with COVID-19, avoid contact with your pet, including petting, snuggling, being kissed or licked, and sharing food. If you must care for your pet or be around animals while you are sick, wash your hands before and after you interact with pets and wear a facemask. See the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) COVID-19 webpage for more information at <https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/coronavirus/>.
- Information for household members and caregivers can be found on the DSHS COVID-19 webpage.

CALL AHEAD BEFORE VISITING YOUR DOCTOR

- **Call ahead:** If you have a medical appointment, call the healthcare provider and tell them that you have COVID-19. This will help the healthcare provider's office take steps to keep other people from getting infected or exposed.

WEAR A FACEMASK IF YOU ARE SICK

- You should wear a facemask when you are around other people (e.g., sharing a room or vehicle) or pets and before you enter a healthcare provider's office.

COVER YOUR COUGHS AND SNEEZES

- **Cover:** Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or the inside of your elbow when you cough or sneeze. Try not to cough or sneeze into your bare hands.
- **Dispose:** Throw used tissues in a lined trash can.

- **Wash hands:** Immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or, if soap and water are not available, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

CLEAN YOUR HANDS OFTEN

- **Wash hands:** Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.
- **Hand sanitizer:** If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry.
- **Soap and water:** Soap and water are the best option, especially if hands are visibly dirty.
- **Avoid touching:** Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Handwashing tips can be found on the CDC website.

AVOID SHARING PERSONAL HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

- **Do not share:** You should not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, toothbrushes, towels, or bedding with other people or pets in your home.
- **Wash thoroughly after use:** After using these items, they should be washed thoroughly with soap and water.

CLEAN ALL "HIGH-TOUCH" SURFACES EVERY DAY

- **Clean and disinfect:** Routinely clean high-touch surfaces in your room and bathroom. Let someone else clean and disinfect surfaces in common areas, but not your bedroom and bathroom.
 - If a caregiver or other person needs to clean and disinfect a sick person's bedroom or bathroom, they should do so on an as-needed basis. The caregiver/other person should wear a mask and wait as long as possible after the sick person has used the bathroom.
- **High-touch surfaces include** phones, remote controls, counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables.
 - Clean and disinfect areas that may have blood, stool, or body fluids on them.
- **Household cleaners and disinfectants:** Clean the area or item with soap and water or another detergent if it is dirty. Then, use a household disinfectant.
 - Be sure to follow the instructions on the label to ensure safe and effective use of the product. Many products recommend keeping the

surface wet for several minutes to ensure germs are killed. Many also recommend precautions such as wearing gloves and making sure you have good ventilation during use of the product.

- Most Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered household disinfectants should be effective. A full list of disinfectants can be found on the EPA website at <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>.

COPING WITH COVID-19

This outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) may be stressful for people and communities. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children.

Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations. The emotional impact of an emergency on a person can depend on the person's characteristics and experiences, the social and economic circumstances of the person and their community, and the availability of local resources. People can become more distressed if they see repeated images or hear repeated reports about the outbreak in the media.

People who may respond more strongly to the stress of a crisis include:

- People who have preexisting mental health conditions, including problems with substance use
- Children
- People who are helping with the response to COVID-19, like doctors and other health care providers, or first responders

Coping with these feelings and getting help when you need it will help you, your family, and your community recover from a disaster. Take care of yourself and others in your community and know when and how to seek help. More information on mental health and coping with COVID-19 is available on the CDC website.

Call your healthcare provider if stress reactions interfere with your daily activities for several days in a row.