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Department of Family  
and Protective Services

# **COVID-19**

# **Tips for Caregivers**

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**Updated 2/23/2021**

Disclaimer: This information reflects the best information available as of this date. Please continue to consult local/state public health websites and/or CDC for updated guidance.

# What is COVID-19?

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1. COVID-19 is a respiratory virus. Current symptoms have included mild to severe respiratory illness with the most common symptoms being fever, cough, and difficulty breathing.
2. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) the virus is spread mainly from person-to-person, between people who are in close contact with each other (within about 6 feet).
3. Spread is primarily through respiratory droplets and secretions produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
4. The risk for severe illness with COVID19 increases with age, with older adults at higher risk. Adults of any age with certain conditions are also at higher risk for severe disease, and these high-risk conditions are outlined on the [CDC website](#)



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# Symptoms and Screening Questions

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The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, coughing, and shortness of breath.

Screen all visitors and individuals with any of the conditions below should be restricted from entering.

## Symptoms of COVID-19

- Fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit (°F) or higher or report feeling feverish
- Undergoing evaluation for SARS-CoV-2 infection (such as pending [viral test](#))
- Diagnosis of SARS-CoV-2 infection in the prior 10 days
- [Close contact](#) to someone with SARS-CoV-2 infection during the prior 14 days

If the individual requires **immediate** medical care, call 911 for an ambulance and inform EMS of the individual's symptoms and concern for COVID-19.



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# Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19?

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A healthcare provider and/or public health staff will evaluate whether an individual can be cared for at home. If it is determined that an individual does not need to be hospitalized and can be isolated at home, their health care provider and/or local or state health department may monitor that individual.

- A. Separate the individual from other people and animals (*while there are no reports of animals becoming sick, it is best to stay away from them until more is known about the virus*)
- B. Isolate the individual in a private room with the door closed, and if possible, the individual should avoid sharing a bathroom with others.
- C. Remain at least six feet away from the individual, if possible.
- D. Call ahead before visiting the doctor.
- E. You may be contacted by the local or state health department for follow up and contact tracing. You may share information about the child related to their COVID diagnosis and contacts.

Also see the extensive CDC Guidance, ["If you are Sick or Caring for Someone"](#).



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# Isolation vs Quarantine

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**Isolation and quarantine help protect the public by preventing exposure to people who have or may have a contagious disease.**

**Isolation** separates sick people with a contagious disease from people who are not sick.

**Quarantine** separates and restricts the movement of people who were exposed to



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# Face masks

CDC recommends that people wear masks in public settings, at events and gatherings, and anywhere they will be around other people. Effective February 2, 2021, **masks are required** on planes, buses, trains, and other forms of public transportation traveling into, within, or out of the United States and in U.S. transportation hubs such as airports and stations.

Correct and consistent **mask use** is a critical step everyone can take to prevent getting and spreading COVID-19. Masks work best when everyone wears them, but not all masks provide the same protection. When choosing a mask, look at how well it fits, how well it filters the air, and how many layers it has.



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## Two important ways to make sure your mask works the best it can

1

**Make sure your mask fits snugly against your face.** Gaps can let air with respiratory droplets leak in and out around the edges of the mask



2

**Pick a mask with layers to keep your respiratory droplets in and others' out.** A mask with layers will stop more respiratory droplets getting inside your mask or escaping from your mask if you are sick.

# Face masks continued...

## Do



### Choose a mask with a **Nose Wire**

- A nose wire is a metal strip along the top of the mask
- Nose wires prevent air from leaking out of the top of the mask.
- Bend the nose wire over your nose to fit close to your face.



### Use a **Mask Fitter or Brace**

- Use a mask fitter or brace over a disposable mask or a cloth mask to prevent air from leaking around the edges of the mask.



### Check that it **Fits Snugly** over your nose, mouth, and chin

- Check for gaps by cupping your hands around the outside edges of the mask.
- Make sure no air is flowing from the area near your eyes or from the sides of the mask.
- If the mask has a good fit, you will feel warm air come through the front of the mask and may be able to see the mask material move in and out with each breath.



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# Face masks continued...



Check that it **Fits Snugly** over your nose, mouth, and chin

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Add **Layers** of material

2 ways to layer

- Use a cloth mask that has multiple layers of fabric.
- Wear one disposable mask underneath a cloth mask.
  - The second mask should push the edges of the inner mask against your face.

**Make sure you can see and breathe easily**



**Knot and Tuck** ear loops of a 3-ply mask

- Knot the ear loops of a 3-ply face mask where they join the edge of the mask
- Fold and tuck the unneeded material under the edges
- For video instructions, see: <https://youtu.be/UANi8Cc71A0>  .



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# Face masks continued...

## Do NOT



Combine two disposable masks

- Disposable masks are not designed to fit tightly and wearing more than one will not improve fit.



Combine a KN95 mask with any other mask.

- Only use one KN95 mask at a time.



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# What do I do if I suspect exposure to COVID-19?

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Self-quarantine for COVID-19 is recommended for individuals who have had close contact (within 6 feet for 15 minutes or more) with someone with COVID-19 during the infected person's infectious period (48 hours prior to symptoms or positive test). Someone who has tested positive for COVID and recovered does not have to quarantine or get tested again for 3 months as long as no new symptoms develop.

- a. Anticipate up to 14 days quarantine at home.
- b. Try to have a two-week supply of non-perishable food items in the pantry. Stock long-life alternatives to perishable food items, such as powdered and UHT milk, tinned fruit and frozen vegetables.
- c. Have a supply of disposable tissues, antibacterial wipes and latex gloves.
- d. Check that your first aid kit includes a thermometer and medicine to reduce fever such as acetaminophen.
- e. Make sure you have enough of any prescription and non-prescription medication you need to last a couple of weeks.



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# Other Precautions

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- Visitors who live in a community where significant community transmission is occurring should be asked not to visit the program. When visitation procedures are revised, the congregate care program should develop and issue communications to all potential visitors, family members, and funding agencies regarding any changes. \*\*As a reminder, DFPS staff must be allowed access to children and youth.
- If signs or symptoms of a respiratory infection, such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, or sore throat develop while an individual is on-site, the individual should put on a mask and move to an isolated area of your program.
- Keep a daily log of names and contact information for employees, clients, visitors, and vendors.
- Wear a [mask](#) to protect yourself and others and stop the spread of COVID-19.
- [Stay at least 6 feet \(about 2 arm lengths\)](#) from others who don't live with you.
- Avoid crowds. The more people you are in contact with, the more likely you are to be exposed to COVID-19.

# Strategies to minimize the spread of COVID-19

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## **Cover coughs and sneezes**

Remind individuals to cover their mouths and noses with a tissue when they cough or sneeze. Throw used tissues in a lined trash can. Immediately wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or, if soap and water are not available, clean hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

## **Clean hands often**

1. Remind individuals to wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after they blow their nose, cough, or sneeze; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
2. Soap and water are the best option if hands are visibly dirty.
3. Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

## **Avoid sharing personal household items**

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



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# Strategies to minimize the spread of COVID-19 continued...

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## Clean all “high-touch” surfaces at least every day (or more often if possible)

1. High touch surfaces include counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables. Also, clean any surfaces that may have blood, stool, or body fluids on them. Use a household cleaning spray or wipe, according to the label instructions. Labels contain instructions for safe and effective use of the cleaning product including precautions you should take when applying the product, such as wearing gloves and making sure you have good ventilation during use of the product.
2. Ensure cleaning product states that it is effective against coronaviruses, on the label or as listed [here](#).
3. Also see the extensive CDC Guidance, [“If you are Sick or Caring for Someone”](#).



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# Strategies to minimize the spread of COVID-19 continued...

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**Clean all “high-touch” surfaces at least every day (or more often if possible)**

**When someone in the household has COVID-19...**

- Put on a mask and ask the sick person to put on a mask before entering the room.
- Wear gloves when you touch or have contact with the sick person’s blood, stool, or body fluids, such as saliva, mucus, vomit, and urine. Throw out gloves into a lined trash can and wash your hands right away.

**Videos from the CDC of how to put on and take off personal protective equipment can be found [here](#).**



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# Other Protective Measures

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1. Post signs at the entrance with instructions for hand hygiene and identifying individuals with symptoms of respiratory infection.
2. Decisions about when to scale back or cancel activities should be made in consultation with your local public health official(s) and informed by a review of the COVID-19 situation in your community.
3. Monitor and manage ill residents, including limiting participation in and transportation to outside activities (such as day programs and jobs).
4. Have a plan for how personnel who may have been exposed to an individual with COVID-19 will be handled.
5. Implement strict infection-control measures.
6. Adhere to reporting protocols to public health authorities.
7. Train and educate program personnel about preventing the transmission of respiratory pathogens such as COVID-19.
8. Post signs at the entrance with instructions for hand hygiene and identifying individuals with symptoms of respiratory infection.

Useful communication tools may be found at the [Texas Department of State Health Services website](#).



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# Employees

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1. Employees exhibiting symptoms of illness (fever, cough, difficulty breathing) should be sent home immediately and should contact their healthcare provider. For illnesses other than COVID-19, staff should not return to work until they are free of fever, signs of a fever, and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, without use of fever-reducing or other symptom altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants).
2. If an employee is diagnosed with COVID-19 they cannot return to work until they have been authorized to leave their home by their local health authority or medical provider.
3. If the needs of the program exceed current staffing capacity or ability, contact your licensing or funding agency to prioritize service provision and planning.



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# Ongoing Management of Congregate Care Program Site

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## All congregate care programs should continue to:

1. Review their current policies and procedures to minimize exposures to respiratory pathogens such as influenza and COVID-19.
2. Review emergency preparedness plans and assess for continued operation in case of an emergency.
3. Assess both their program needs and workforce capacity to accommodate the potential need for supplies, an increased number of private rooms and the potential decrease in staffing availability.
  - a. Develop plans to monitor absenteeism at the site.
  - b. Cross-train personnel to perform essential functions so the site can operate even if key staff are absent.
4. Wash all bedding/linens. Wash and dry with the warmest temperatures recommended on the fabric label and follow detergent label and instructions for use.
5. Facility staff should wear gloves and gowns when cleaning and may need additional PPE depending on the disinfectant product in use; consult and follow the manufacturer's instructions for use. Staff should wear disposable gloves while handling potentially soiled items/bedding and while cleaning and disinfecting surfaces. Place all used gloves and other disposable contaminated items in a bag that can be tied closed before disposing of them with other waste.



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# Ongoing Management of Congregate Care Program Site continued...

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6. Ensure waste baskets available and visible. Make sure wastebaskets are emptied on a regular basis. Persons emptying waste baskets should wear gloves to do so and dispose of the gloves immediately.
7. Practice [everyday preventive actions](#) to keep from getting sick: wash your hands often; avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth; and frequently clean and disinfect surfaces.
8. Wash and dry with the warmest temperatures recommended on the fabric label and follow detergent label and instructions for use.
9. Facility staff should wear gloves and gowns when cleaning and may need additional PPE depending on the disinfectant product in use; consult and follow the manufacturer's instructions for use. Staff should wear disposable gloves while handling potentially soiled items/bedding and while cleaning and disinfecting surfaces. Place all used gloves and other disposable contaminated items in a bag that can be tied closed before disposing of them with other waste.
10. Ensure waste baskets available and visible. Make sure wastebaskets are emptied on a regular basis. Persons emptying waste baskets should wear gloves to do so and dispose of the gloves immediately.

Also refer to [CDC: Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)



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# For Caregivers

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**Not all children and teens respond to stress in the same way. Some common changes to watch for include:**

1. Excessive crying or irritation in younger children
2. Returning to behaviors they have outgrown (for example, toileting accidents or bedwetting)
3. Excessive worry or sadness
4. Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits
5. Irritability and “acting out” behaviors in teens
6. Poor school performance or avoiding school
7. Difficulty with attention and concentration
8. Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past
9. Unexplained headaches or body pain
10. Use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs



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# Some potential reactions from children and youth

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## **For infants to 2 year olds**

- Infants and toddlers may become more cranky. They may cry more than usual or want to be held and cuddled more.

## **For 3 to 6 year olds**

- Preschool and kindergarten children may return to behaviors they have outgrown. For example, toileting accidents, bed-wetting, or being frightened about being separated from their parents/caregivers. They may also have tantrums or a hard time sleeping.

## **For 7 to 10 year olds**

- Older children may feel sad, mad, or afraid that the event will happen again. Peers may share false information; however, parents or caregivers can correct the misinformation. Older children may focus on details of the event and want to talk about it all the time or not want to talk about it at all. They may have trouble concentrating.

[Healthychildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org) - the parent and caregiver education portal of the American Academy of Pediatrics has a lot of great information and suggestions both generally and for COVID-19.



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# Some potential reactions from children and youth continued...

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## **For preteens and teenagers**

- Some preteens and teenagers respond to trauma by acting out. This could include reckless driving, and alcohol or drug use. Others may become afraid to leave the home. They may cut back on how much time they spend with their friends. They can feel overwhelmed by their intense emotions and feel unable to talk about them. Their emotions may lead to increased arguing and even fighting with siblings, parents/caregivers or other adults.

## **For special needs children**

- Children who need continuous use of a breathing machine or are confined to a wheelchair or bed, may have stronger reactions to a threatened or actual disaster. They might have more intense distress, worry or anger than children without special needs because they have less control over day-to-day well-being than other people. The same is true for children with other physical, emotional, or intellectual limitations. Children with special needs may need extra words of reassurance, more explanations about the event, and more comfort and other positive physical contact such as hugs from loved ones.
- Ventilator-dependent children may need special guidance and caregivers should maintain close contact with their medical team.



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# What You Can Do to Help Children Cope

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## There are many things you can do to support your child

1. Take time to talk with your child or teen about the COVID-19 outbreak. Answer questions and [share facts](#) about COVID-19 in a way that your child or teen can understand.
2. Reassure the child or teen that they are safe. Let them know it is ok if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.
3. Limit your family's exposure to news coverage of the event, including social media. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.
4. Try to keep up with regular routines. If schools are closed, create a schedule for learning activities and relaxing or fun activities.
5. Be a role model.
6. Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well.
7. Connect with your friends and family members.



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# Reporting a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19

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Should a child or youth in your care become ill with COVID-19, please ensure that, after seeking medical care, you report that information to the Abuse Hotline. 1-800-252-5400

CPS has created a mailbox for you to use to report when a child in your care receives COVID-19 testing and to report on the results of such testing. Based on this information, Superior will follow up with you to provide additional support and the CPS caseworker will be notified. [dfpscovid19testreporting@dfps.state.tx.us](mailto:dfpscovid19testreporting@dfps.state.tx.us)

In the subject line: Child's name and Personal Identification Number (PID)

In your email, please include as much of the following information as possible:

1. Information about the child: Name, Date of Birth, Medicaid number, Personal Identification Number (PID)
2. CPS Caseworker's name
3. Address and type of placement (such as foster home, shelter)
4. Your name and contact information (phone number)
5. Date of Test and Testing site (if known)
6. Test results

**Please note:** this email box is only to report on actual COVID-19 testing and results. Thank you for all you are doing to provide quality care for children.



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# Content sources

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1. [National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases \(NCIRD\), Division of Viral Diseases](#)
2. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-prevent-spread.html>
3. <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-guidance-and-directives#caregivers->
4. <https://www.cdc.gov/childrenindisasters/helping-children-cope.html>
5. <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>
6. <https://www.healthychildren.org/>
7. <https://www.healthychildren.org/spanish/paginas/default.aspx>
8. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/index.html>
9. <https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/coronavirus/tools.aspx>
10. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>