

# TOO SOON TO LET YOUR GUARD DOWN

Important Information for You and Your Family About the Coronavirus



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# Important Information for You and Your Family About the Coronavirus



Inside this guide you will find what you need to know to protect yourself, your family and your community from COVID-19.

It will also help you understand the importance of getting tested if you feel you have been exposed to COVID-19. Services and public benefits are available to you, regardless of immigration status or whether you have insurance.

Don't let fear stop you from getting the care you need. The effects of avoiding or postponing medical care may be life-threatening. Help keep yourself, your family and your community healthy.

## **GET TESTED AND TREATED.**

**For testing and treatment information, visit [emergencyhouston.org](https://www.emergencyhouston.org)**

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## How to protect yourself and others from COVID-19

COVID-19 is an infection that is caused by coronavirus. It mainly affects the lungs. It can become deadly, especially for older adults and people with underlying health conditions.

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

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Body aches
- Chills
- Loss of taste/smell
- Diarrhea



### What can I do to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

The most important and immediate thing we can practice is self-quarantine and social distancing. We encourage you to do your part to help slow the spread. We are all being asked to change our behavior and lifestyle. These changes are important to combat the virus and improve our community's health. When you feel sick, assume you have the virus and change your behavior or lifestyle to avoid transmitting infection.

- Stay home if you can.
- Keep 6 feet from others not in your household when you must go out.
- Wash your hands often for at least 20 seconds, with warm water if available.
- Where a mask to cover your mouth and nose.
- Cough or sneeze into a sleeve or tissue. Wash your hands afterwards.
- Clean surfaces you touch often.
- Protect older adults and those with health problems, who have a higher risk of getting sick.
- Take extra care if you are over 65 or have a chronic health issue.
- Call your healthcare provider if you get a fever, cough or shortness of breath.
- Seek immediate medical care if your breathing problems worsen suddenly.
- Follow the advice of public health officials: [houstonemergency.org](https://www.houstonemergency.org) or [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).



## I'm showing symptoms. What are my next steps?

If you think you have been exposed to COVID-19 and are showing symptoms such as a fever, fatigue or a cough, we advise you to call your healthcare provider for medical advice as a first step.

Those with severe **symptoms** such as difficulty breathing, persistent pain or pressure in chest, or bluish lips or face, should seek care immediately by going directly to an emergency room or calling 911. If possible, call ahead to your emergency room to notify healthcare workers you are coming in with symptoms associated with COVID-19.

Those with **moderate symptoms**, such as fatigue, sore throats, wet coughs and fevers, should look into visiting testing locations nearest to them. Unless it's an emergency, we advise you to steer clear of the emergency room in an effort to further protect yourself and others from spreading or contracting the virus.

Those with **mild symptoms**, such as fatigue or dry coughs, are encouraged to stay home and contact their healthcare provider by phone for guidance on medical needs and next steps.

## Who should get tested for COVID-19?

It remains difficult to evaluate if a person is carrying the virus. Above all, the most important thing is not to ignore your symptoms.

If you fit into the two priority categories below, you should consider visiting the nearest testing location.

- Older Adults (Ages 60+) and chronically ill and immuno compromised individuals
- People who have had, or are suspected of having, contact with confirmed COVID-19 cases



## Where can I go for free testing?

For Houston-area testing sites, check [houstonsurgency.org](https://houstonsurgency.org) or call **832.393.4220**.

### **Don't let fear stop you from getting care.**

The effects of avoiding or postponing healthcare services can be life-threatening. Help keep yourself, your family and your community healthy. Get tested and treated.

### **Are you undocumented or don't have insurance?**

You can still get COVID-19 testing and treatment. This care does not count under the public charge rule because it is treatment for an emergency medical condition.

**Services and public benefits are available to you, regardless of your immigration status.**

## What to do if you are diagnosed with COVID-19.

If you are sick, you should stay away from other people and pets to help protect them from contracting COVID-19. An effective way of self-isolating is to stay in a designated “sick room,” and use a separate bathroom if one is available.

### **Wear a mask**

While you are sick, you should wear a facemask at all times. Clean, disposable face masks will help prevent spreading COVID-19. If you do not have access to disposable facemasks, you can make your own mask, using cloth materials like a scarf or bandana.

### **Practice good hygiene**

We know you have heard it many times before, but washing your hands really is one of the best ways to prevent spreading COVID-19. Although simple, many people don't wash their hands properly or for long enough. When you are sick, washing your hands is even more important. You should immediately wash your hands after you cough, sneeze or blow your nose. Use a tissue to cover your mouth and nose, and then throw the tissue in the trash can and wash your hands. Remember to avoid touching your face, including your eyes, with unwashed hands.

### **Do not share household items**

While you are home-isolating, do not use the same items as the rest of your household. A set of things like towels, bedding, eating utensils and dishes should be reserved for people who are sick. After you use these items, be sure to wash them with soap and water, or use the dishwasher or washing machine.

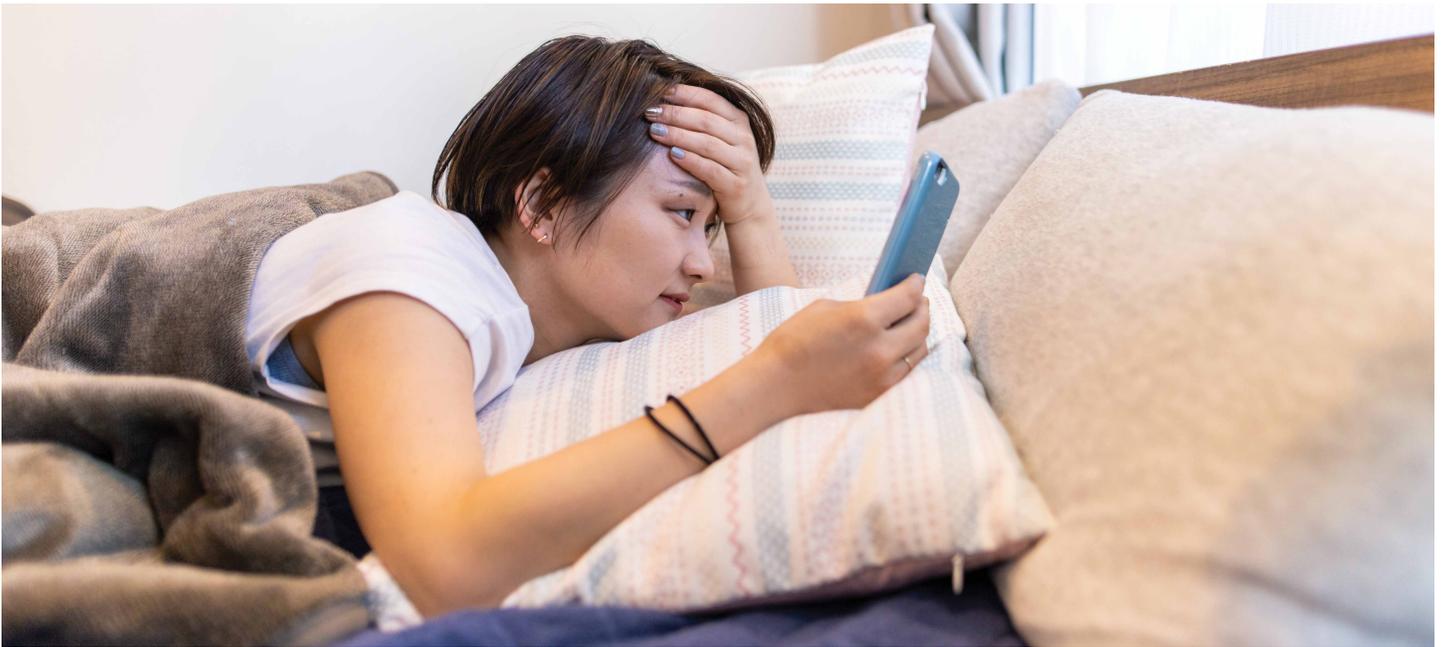
### **Cleaning your home**

If you are sick with COVID-19, it is important to clean all high-touch surfaces every day. High-touch surfaces include things like phones, countertops, doorknobs, bathroom surfaces, keyboards and remote controls. Use a household disinfectant product and follow the instructions on the label.

While you are self-isolating, you should clean the high-touch surfaces in the room where you sleep and in your bathroom. Ask caregivers to clean the surfaces in the rest of your home so that you can stay isolated.

Other people in your household should avoid cleaning your “sick room” and bathroom, because that will put them at an increased risk for contracting COVID-19. If you are unable to clean your own isolation spaces, your caregiver can clean them for you, but should wear a mask and limit how often he/she enters your areas.





### **Monitoring your symptoms and seeking medical care**

Remember: there is no specific antiviral treatment recommended for COVID-19. Together with your healthcare provider, you should develop a plan for relieving some of your symptoms and discuss what to do if your condition gets worse.

Most people with COVID-19 display only mild symptoms and can comfortably recover at home without medical care. If you need additional assistance, Memorial Hermann's virtual-care options provide convenient ways to connect with an urgent care provider, from your home, 24 hours/day.

Virtual care options are recommended so that you can stay at home and avoid spreading the virus. If your symptoms worsen after your online appointment with a healthcare provider, you should go to the nearest emergency room.



**If you exhibit any of the following symptoms, you should seek emergency care as this can be a sign of respiratory or cardiac arrest:**

- Labored breathing
- Bluish lips or face
- Confusion
- Seizures
- Persistent chest pain or pressure
- Inability to talk or be roused

**Higher risk patients, such as those with prior lung conditions like severe asthma, emphysema or chronic pulmonary disease and those who have had a heart attack, stroke or organ transplant should be on high alert. This same high alert also applies to those with diabetes, obesity, or are over the age of 60 as well as those who take immunosuppressant or cancer drugs.**

## Safety tips for using parks

# DO

- DO** Visit parks that are close to your home.
- DO** Check with the park or recreation area in advance to prepare safely and to find out if the bathroom facilities are open and what services are available.
- DO** Stay at least 6 feet away from others you don't live with ("social distancing") and take other steps to prevent COVID-19.
- DO** Carefully consider use of playgrounds, and help children follow guidelines.
- DO** Play it safe around and in swimming pools, hot tubs, and water playgrounds by keeping space between yourself and others.

# DON'T

**DON'T** Visit parks if you are sick with COVID-19, tested positive for COVID-19, or know you were recently exposed to COVID-19.

**DON'T** Visit crowded parks.



Source:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/visitors.html>

## Resources

- To learn about more about COVID-19 visit, **[memorialhermann.org/coronavirus](https://www.memorialhermann.org/coronavirus)**
- For testing and treatment information, visit **[emergencyhouston.org](https://www.emergencyhouston.org)** or call the **COVID-19 Call Center: 832-393-4220**.
- To learn more about COVID-19, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/visitors.html>
- For community services, visit [www.211.org](https://www.211.org)
- For information about area parks, visit <http://www.houstontx.gov/parks/communitycenters/>

## Feeling sick and not sure what to do?

**Call the free 24/7 Nurse Health Line. Trained nurses will help direct you to the care you need. Call 713.338.7979 or visit [www.nursehealthline.org](https://www.nursehealthline.org).**

Visit the **[memorialhermann.org/coronavirus](https://www.memorialhermann.org/coronavirus)** for more helpful resources.

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