

Be Red Cross Ready

Prepare so you can protect.



Family Caregivers and COVID-19

People at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 are older adults and [people of any age with certain health conditions](#), including:

- Cancer
- Chronic kidney disease
- Chronic lung disease
- Dementia or other neurological conditions
- Diabetes (type 1 or type 2)
- Down syndrome
- Heart conditions
- HIV infection
- Having a weakened immune system
- Liver disease
- Overweight and obesity
- Pregnancy
- Sickle cell disease
- Smoking, current or former
- Having had a solid organ or blood stem cell transplant
- Stroke or cerebrovascular disease
- Substance use disorders

People at increased risk, and those who care for them, need to take additional precautions to protect against COVID-19. For more information, see [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus). Use this tip sheet to help protect yourself, your loved ones, and your neighbors.

Get a COVID-19 vaccine

- Get a [COVID-19 vaccine](#) and help your loved one get a vaccine, too. COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. Search [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov), text your zip code to 438829, or call 1-800-232-0233 to find COVID-19 vaccine locations near you.
- People are fully vaccinated:
 - 2 weeks after their second dose in a 2-dose series, like the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or
 - 2 weeks after a single-dose vaccine, like Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine
 - If it has been less than 2 weeks since your shot, or if you still need to get your second dose, you are NOT fully protected. Keep taking all prevention steps until you are fully vaccinated.

If you are fully vaccinated, what has changed

- You can gather indoors with fully vaccinated people without wearing a mask.
- You can gather indoors with unvaccinated people from one other household (for example, visiting with relatives who all live together) without masks unless any of those people or anyone they live with has an increased risk for [severe illness from COVID-19](#).
- If you have been around someone who has COVID-19, you do not need to stay away from others or get tested unless you have symptoms.

If you are fully vaccinated, what has not changed

- You should still take steps to [protect yourself and others](#) in many situations, like wearing a mask, staying at least 6 feet apart from others, avoiding crowds, and poorly ventilated spaces. Take these precautions whenever you are:
- In public
 - Gathering with unvaccinated people from more than one other household
 - Visiting with an unvaccinated person at increased risk of [severe illness from COVID-19](#) or who lives with a person at increased risk.

Wear a mask

Always wear a mask when you are around your loved one (inside and outside). Help your loved one wear a mask when they are around people they do not live with. The mask should cover the nose and mouth and be secured under the chin. Choose a mask that:

- Has 2 or more layers of washable fabric. Completely covers the mouth and nose and secures under the chin. Fits snugly against the sides of the face and does not have gaps. Has a nose wire to prevent air from leaking out of the top of the mask. Does not have an exhaust valve or vent which allows particles to escape.

- If using a gaiter, ensure it has at least 2 layers or can be folded to make 2 layers and that it covers the entire mouth and nose. A face shield cannot replace the use of a face mask

Stay 6 feet apart from others who do not live with you

When going out in public, help your loved one to stay at least 6 feet away from people that they do not live with, and wear a mask. You should do the same.

Avoid crowds and poorly ventilated indoor spaces

Both you and your loved one should avoid crowded indoor spaces. Ensure that your home is properly ventilated by bringing in outdoor air as much as possible. In general, being outdoors and in spaces with good ventilation reduces the risk of exposure.

Clean hands often

Help your loved one wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after being in a public place or after blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing. You should wash your hands frequently, too. Soap and water are always preferable, but if soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of the hands and rub them together until they feel dry. Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

Create a caring support team

Create a caring support team made up of several trusted individuals who can help you perform some key caregiving tasks. Assign them practical things that they can do to help, for example, phoning your loved one regularly, helping with errands and getting groceries. Find out about trusted services that may be available in your community, such as local nonprofits offering food delivery, and houses of worship offering online religious services. Call 211 for community resources in your area or visit the [211 Call Center Search website](#). For additional local resources, see [findhelp.org](#). Find your local food bank at [feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank](#).

Have care plans in place

Have a care plan in place for yourself and help your loved one develop a care plan, too. A care plan summarizes your medical conditions, medicines, healthcare providers, emergency contacts, and end-of-life care options. The CDC has guidance on developing a [care plan](#) and a [fillable care plan form](#) to help you. Determine who will care for you and your loved one should you become ill. Make sure they understand both of your medical needs, and that they have a copy of each of your care plans.

Have a supply of medications and food

To avoid unnecessary trips, have a 1-month supply of medications and 2-week supply of food and supplies for you and your loved one.

- A 1-month supply of prescription medication includes over-the-counter medications like cough suppressants, fever-reducing drugs, a thermometer, and other medical supplies or equipment.
- A 2-week supply of food also includes water, household cleaning and disinfection supplies, soap, paper products, and personal hygiene items.

Additional Resources

- Center for Disease Control: [cdc.gov/coronavirus](#)
- American Red Cross: [redcross.org/coronavirus](#)
- National Institute on Aging at [nia.nih.gov](#)
- Call 211 for local resources. Or visit [211search.org](#). See [findhelp.org](#)
- AARP at [aarp.org/coronavirus](#) and [aarp.org/crf](#)
- Find your local food bank at [feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank](#). Call first to check requirements
- To reach out for free 24/7 counseling or support, call or text the [Disaster Distress Helpline](#) at 1-800-985-5990
- If you are feeling overwhelmed with emotions such as sadness, depression, anxiety, or feel like you want to harm yourself or someone else, call 911 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)