

COVID GUIDANCE FROM MASS.GOV

If you have symptoms of a respiratory virus (isolation)

If you have new symptoms of a respiratory virus, such as a fever, sore throat, cough or a runny or stuffy nose, you should stay home and stay away from others in your household.

While you are staying at home:

- Get **tested** for COVID-19 and flu. Talk to your healthcare provider about getting **treatment** if you test positive.
- Stay away from others in your household. Wear a mask when you have to be around them.
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze. Use a tissue or your inner elbow, not your hands.
- **Clean high-touch surfaces** (such as countertops, handrails, and doorknobs) often.

You should stay home even if you don't know what virus is making you sick.

When you start to feel better:

You may begin to resume normal activities with precautions if:

1. You have not had a fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medicines; AND
2. Your other symptoms are improving

You may still be able to spread the virus that made you sick, even if you are feeling better.

For at least the first 5 days after you resume normal activities, take these extra precautions:

- Avoid crowded indoor spaces. Wear a mask anytime you are indoors around other people
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid spending time with people who are at **increased risk for severe disease**

If your symptoms get worse again:

If your fever comes back or any other symptoms start to get worse, you should go back home until you are better again. Wait to resume normal activities until you have not had a fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medicines AND your symptoms are improving again. When you resume normal activities, take the recommended additional precautions during the next 5 days:

- Avoid crowded indoor spaces
- Wear a mask indoors around other people
- Wash your hands often
- Cover your coughs and sneezes

If you have tested positive for a respiratory virus but do not have any symptoms

You can still spread the virus. Take additional precautions to protect others from getting sick.

For at least the first 5 days, take these extra precautions:

- Avoid crowded indoor spaces. Wear a mask anytime you are indoors around other people.
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid spending time with people who are at **increased risk for severe disease**.
- Although not required, choosing to stay home for about 72 hours may help reduce the chances that you spread the virus to others. While you stay home you should:

- Stay away from others in your household. Wear a mask when you have to be around them.
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze. Use a tissue or your inner elbow, not your hands.
- **Clean high-touch surfaces** (such as countertops, handrails, and doorknobs) often.

If you develop any respiratory symptoms:

If you get a fever, or any other symptoms of respiratory illness, you should go home. You may begin to resume normal activities with some precautions when:

1. You have not had a fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medicines; AND
2. Your symptoms are improving again

Then, take the recommended extra precautions during the next 5 days:

- Avoid crowded indoor spaces
- Wear a mask indoors around other people
- Wash your hands often
- Cover your coughs and sneezes

If you were exposed to someone with a respiratory virus illness (exposure precautions)

If you have been exposed to someone with a respiratory virus, you do not need to stay home as long as you remain asymptomatic. You may be able to spread a respiratory virus before developing symptoms.

To protect others, especially those with **risk factors for severe illness**, take precautions:

- Wash your hands often
- Consider wearing a mask and avoiding crowded places
- Monitor yourself for symptoms carefully

Stay home if you start to develop any signs of illness.

Protecting people with risk factors for severe illness from respiratory viruses

When you are sick from a respiratory virus, you may spread germs for about 10 days after your symptoms start or after a positive test, even if you don't have symptoms.

Be aware that some people around you may have risk factors for more severe disease. Masking, physical distancing, hand hygiene, and covering your coughs and sneezes helps protect them.

People at increased risk can include:

- Older adults
- Individuals with chronic underlying medical conditions, for example heart, lung, liver or kidney disease
- Young children, especially those under 2 years old
- People with weakened immune systems
- People with disabilities
- Pregnant people

Schools and childcare settings

Schools and childcare settings should follow the recommendations for the general population. Recognize that young children may not always be able to wear a mask effectively. Children under 2 years are not asked to mask when they return to normal activities.

School health offices are health care settings. School nurses and other health office staff should follow the [guidance for health care settings](#).

Health care settings

View specific guidance and protocols for health care settings: [Guidance for Health Care Personnel with SARS-CoV2 Infection or Exposure](#).

Health care guidance is intended for:

- Inpatient settings (e.g., hospitals, long-term care facilities)
- Outpatient settings (e.g., clinics, urgent care, ambulatory surgical centers, imaging centers, dialysis centers, physical therapy and rehabilitation centers, alternative medicine clinics)
- Community settings where health care is being delivered (e.g., emergency medical services, home health agencies)