COVID-19

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Most people who have COVID-19 have mild symptoms and some people can be infected and never have symptoms. But COVID-19 can also cause severe illness and death. Some groups have a higher risk of severe COVID-19 disease. After infection, some people experience post-COVID conditions. This includes a wide range of new or returning symptoms or ongoing health problems that can last for weeks or months. Even people who did not have symptoms at first can experience post-COVID conditions. See CDC Post-COVID Conditions.

What are coronavirus variants?

Like all viruses, SARS-CoV-2 changes constantly through mutation. These mutations add up and create slightly different versions of the virus, called "variants". Sometimes, a mutation will result in the virus spreading more easily, making people sicker, or making it resistant to treatment or vaccines. Currently, the CDC has found that all 3 vaccines authorized for use in the U.S. are effective at preventing serious illness and death from variants, including the Omicron variant. However, the Omicron variant can cause breakthrough infections in people who are fully vaccinated, especially if they have not received a booster dose. These breakthrough infections are usually milder in people who are up to date with their vaccines.

For more information, see the CDC webpage What You Need to Know About Variants.

How is COVID-19 spread?

The SARS-CoV-2 virus spreads from person to person mainly through respiratory droplets that are released into the air by a person who has COVID-19. For example, when they speak, sing, cough, shout, sneeze, or breathe heavily. These droplets are then breathed in by other people or land in their nose, mouth, or eyes. A person's risk of getting infected goes up the closer they are to someone with COVID-19. Enclosed places with poor air flow increase the risk of getting infected. This is because the droplets that have the virus can concentrate and spread in the air past 6 feet. They can even stay floating in the air after an infected person has left the room. It is also possible, but less common, for the virus to spread by touching a surface with droplets on it and then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. See the CDC webpage How COVID-19 spreads.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Symptoms of COVID-19 may include one or more of the following: fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath or trouble breathing, feeling tired, muscle or body aches, headache, sore throat, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, stuffy or runny nose, or new loss of taste or smell. Some people with COVID-19 infection never get symptoms. If you have symptoms of COVID-19, get a COVID-19 test right away and stay home. Talk to your doctor about any of these or other symptoms that worry you. If you need help finding a doctor, call the 24/7 helpline at 2-1-1 or visit the 211LA.org. To learn about symptoms & what to do if you are sick, visit ph.lacounty.gov/covidcare.

Important: If you are at high risk for getting very sick from COVID-19 you may be able to get medicine to help keep you out of the hospital. If you have a positive test and any symptoms, even if they are very mild, contact a doctor right away. Don't delay: the medicines work best when they are given as soon as possible after symptoms start. See ph.lacounty.gov/covidmedicines for more information.

When should I get tested for COVID-19?

It is important to get a COVID-19 test, even if you are up to date with your COVID-19 vaccines:

- If you have symptoms of COVID-19
- If you are a close contact[1] to someone with COVID-19
- If you have traveled internationally or to areas in the US where COVID-19 is spreading quickly
- As an extra layer of protection to protect others from getting sick, such as before and after attending a gathering or event. This is especially important if you or someone you are meeting or you live with is at higher risk for severe COVID-19.

Visit ph.lacounty.gov/covidtests for more information on when to get tested and how to get a test.

What if I test positive for COVID-19?

This means the test detected the COVID-19 virus. It is very likely you have COVID-19 and could spread it to others. You must isolate (stay away from others) for at least 5 days. You are required to wear a highly protective mask if you must be around others while you are in isolation. Follow the isolation instructions closely at ph.lacounty.gov/covidisolation.

Tell all your close contacts that they have been exposed. They could be infected and must quarantine unless they are exempt. Give them the instructions for close contacts, available in multiple languages at ph.lacounty.gov/covidquarantine. Close contacts must follow the instructions even if they feel well or are vaccinated.

Learn more about tests results at Understanding Your Viral Test Result at ph.lacounty.gov/covidtests.

Important: If you are at high risk for getting very sick from COVID-19 you may be able to get medicine to help keep you out of the hospital. If you have a positive test and any symptoms, even if they are very mild, contact a doctor right away. Don't delay: the medicines work best when they are given as soon as possible after symptoms start. See ph.lacounty.gov/covidmedicines for more information.

What if I have been in close contact to someone with COVID-19?

If you are a close contact[1] to someone with COVID-19 you must follow all instructions for close contacts even if you feel well or are vaccinated. You must quarantine (stay away from others) for at least 5 days (unless you are exempt)*. Your quarantine can end after Day 5 if you don't have symptoms **and** you have a negative COVID-19 viral test collected on Day 5. If you don't get tested on or after Day 5, you can leave quarantine after Day 10 (as long as you did not develop symptoms).

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[1] A "close contact" is any of the following people who were exposed to you while you were infectious*:
   a. Any person who was within 6 feet of you for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period
   b. Any person who had unprotected contact with your body fluids and/or secretions. For example, you coughed or sneezed on them, you shared utensils, a cup, or saliva with them, or they cared for you without wearing appropriate protective equipment.

*You are considered to be infectious (meaning you can spread COVID-19 to others) starting 2 days before your symptoms began until your isolation ends. If you test positive for COVID-19 but do not have any symptoms, you are considered to be infectious from 2 days before your test was taken until your isolation ends.

You are required to monitor your health and wear a highly protective mask if you need to be around others and to. If you leave quarantine after Day 5, it is strongly recommended that you continue to wear a highly protective mask. Follow all the instructions for close contacts closely at ph.lacounty.gov/covidquarantine.

*Quarantine exemptions: You do not need to quarantine if you have no symptoms of COVID-19 AND you are up to date on your COVID-19 vaccines OR if you tested positive using a viral test for COVID-19 within the last 90 days and recovered. (Recovered means you completed the isolation period for your COVID-19 infection.)

When Am I Up to Date on My COVID-19 Vaccines?

You are up to date with your COVID-19 vaccines when you are fully vaccinated and you have received your booster dose, if it is due. See COVID-19 Vaccine Schedules.

You are considered **fully vaccinated** against COVID-19 two (2) weeks after completing your primary series. This means 2 weeks after:

- You got a single dose of Johnson & Johnson (J&J)/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine, or
- You got a second dose of a Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine.

You are also considered **fully vaccinated** after completing a certain non-FDA-authorized/approved series. You are fully vaccinated two weeks after:

- You finished the primary series of a COVID-19 vaccine that has been listed for emergency use by the World Health Organization[2] (but is not FDA authorized/approved), or
- You received all the recommended doses of active COVID-19 vaccine (not placebo) in a clinical trial with confirmed efficacy, or
- You received two doses of any "mix and match" combination of FDA-authorized, FDA-approved, or WHO-listed COVID-19 vaccines at least 17 days apart.

You are eligible for a **booster dose**:

- 2 months after your J&J COVID-19 vaccine
- 5 months after your last dose of your Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine*
- 5 months after completing a non-FDA-approved/authorized series*.

*If you are moderately or severely immunocompromised, you are eligible for a booster dose at least 3 months after your last primary (additional) dose, see COVID-19 Vaccine Schedule—*People with Weak Immune Systems*.

See ph.lacounty.gov/fullyvax for more information including non-FDA authorized/approved vaccines.

See CDC Stay Up to Date with Your COVID-19 Vaccines

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[2] The WHO Emergency Use Listing (EUL) includes the following COVID-19 vaccines: Pfizer-BioNTech (BNT162b2, COMIRNATY, Tozinameran), Moderna (mRNA 1273, Takeda, Spikevax), Johnson & Johnson/Janssen(Ad26.COV2.S), AstraZeneca-Oxford ([ChAdOx1-S (recombinant)], AZD1222, Vaxzevria)), Serum Institute of India (Covishield, Covovax), BIPP (Sinopharm), Sinovac (CoronaVac), Bharat Biotech International (e.g., BBV152,COVAXIN), and Novavax (Nuvaxovid). See WHO website for the most current list.

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How can I get vaccinated against COVID-19?

COVID-19 vaccinations are widely available across LA County without an appointment. Visit www.Vaccinate LACounty.com and click on "How To Get Vaccinated" to find a location near you. If you need help making an appointment, need transportation to a vaccination site, or are homebound, you can call **1-833-540-0473** from 8am to 8:30pm 7 days a week. Information is also available in multiple languages 24/7 by calling 2-1-1. Vaccinations are always free and available to everyone age 5 and over, regardless of immigration status.

How can I protect myself and others from getting COVID-19?

- **Get vaccinated and get a booster when you are eligible.** It is the best way to protect against COVID-19. Vaccination will slow the spread of variants and lower the chances that new, even more dangerous variants emerge.
- **Wear a mask that fits and filters well.** See ph.lacounty.gov/masks for more information.
- **Get medicine to prevent COVID-19.** If you cannot receive a COVID-19 vaccine for medical reasons or your immune system is not strong enough to mount a response to the vaccine, talk to your doctor about treatment to help prevent you from getting COVID-19. For more information, see ph.lacounty.gov/covidmedicines.
- **Avoid places where COVID-19 spreads more easily, i**ncluding crowded places, closed spaces with poor air flow, and settings where people are talking close together.
- **Improve air flow.** Open windows and doors and avoid indoor spaces with poor air flow. See COVID-19 & Indoor Air Quality at Home Ventilation Tips for more information.
- **Choose outdoor spaces** for social and fitness activities.
- **Wash your hands and/or use hand sanitizer often**. Especially after being in public spaces where surfaces are touched by many people.
- **Stay home when you are sick.** If you have symptoms of COVID-19, get a COVID-19 test. You should stay home and away from others until you get the result of your COVID-19 test or until your provider tells you that you don't have COVID-19. Contact a doctor right away if you are at high risk of getting very sick from COVID-19 and you test positive, even if your symptoms are mild. You may be eligible for medicines that help keep people with COVID-19 out of the hospital. Don't delay: the medicines work best when they are given as soon as possible after symptoms start. To learn about symptoms and what to do if you are sick, see lacounty.gov/covidcare.

See ph.lacounty.gov/reducerisk for more tips.

Can I travel?

Do not travel if you are sick or are in either isolation or quarantine. If you are up to date on your vaccines, you can travel. If you are not, it is best to defer travel until you are fully vaccinated and boosted, if eligible. If you do choose to travel, you should follow the CDC domestic or international travel guidance. Depending on whether you are vaccinated and where you are traveling, you may need to test pre and post travel and quarantine upon return from travel. See the LAC DPH Travel Advisory and Guidance for more details.

I'm still feeling stressed about COVID-19 – what can I do?

As the world continues to combat COVID-19, you may feel concerned, worried, and fearful for your health and the health of your loved ones, financial troubles, lifestyle changes and other factors may also cause added stress. Be sure to watch for signs of distress, engage in regular self-care, and seek out help when needed.

If you or someone you know is having a hard time coping, help is available 24/7 by calling the LA County Department of Mental Health's Helpline 1-800-854-7771. You can also text "LA" to 741741 or talk to your doctor. The webpage http://dmh.lacounty.gov/resources includes tips to help manage stress and improve your emotional health.

LA County residents have free access to iPrevail.com, an online mental health resource to help with life's everyday stressors. After a short assessment, you are connected to customized support which may include on-demand chat with peer coaches, self-paced lessons to improve wellbeing, and community support groups. iPrevail is available 24/7 offered in English and Spanish.

Where can I get reliable information about COVID-19?

There is a lot of misinformation about COVID-19. Check trusted sources for accurate information about COVID-19, including the following:

- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health: COVID-19 information: ph.lacounty.gov/Coronavirus
- COVID-19 vaccination:
  - VaccinateLACounty.com for FAQs and factsheets, information on How to Get Vaccinated, and more.
  - DPH Vaccine Call Center **1-833-540-0473** 8am to 8:30pm daily or **2-1-1** (open 24/7) for help with getting vaccinated.
- California Department of Public Health
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- World Health Organization (WHO)

Look out for COVID-19 scams

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, scammers are still at work to cheat people out of money. To learn more about how to avoid a scam and what to do if you are a victim of a scam, visit the DPH COVID-19 Scams and Fraud webpage.