



Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions

Updated October 29, 2020

Under Governor Larry Hogan’s direction, state agencies continue to develop comprehensive and coordinated prevention and response plans for coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) will communicate directly with the public, providing updates as this situation develops and accurate information about how to protect yourself and your family.

If you have questions about COVID-19 that are not answered here, call your local health department or dial 2-1-1.

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a disease caused by a respiratory virus first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in December 2019. COVID-19 a new virus that hasn’t caused illness in humans before. Worldwide, COVID-19 has resulted in thousands of human infections, causing illness and in some cases death. Cases have spread throughout the world, with more cases reported daily.

What is the current COVID-19 situation in Maryland?

Up-to-date information about testing and case counts in Maryland is available at coronavirus.maryland.gov. The page is updated daily.

On May 13, Governor Larry Hogan announced the beginning of Stage One of the ‘[Maryland Strong: Roadmap to Recovery](#),’ which includes moving from a Stay at Home order to a Safer at Home public health advisory and the gradual reopening of retail, manufacturing, houses of worship, and some personal services. On June 5, Maryland moved into Stage Two of recovery with the safe and gradual reopening of workplaces and non-essential businesses. Additional reopenings through Stage Two were announced on June 10, which allowed indoor dining and outdoor amusements to resume on June 12.

On Friday, September 5, Maryland moved from Stage Two to Stage Three of the ‘Maryland Strong: Roadmap to Recovery’ with additional safe and gradual reopenings of most activities with social distancing and face covering requirements. Stage Three will be implemented in multiple phases with a flexible, community-based approach that empowers individual jurisdictions to make

decisions regarding the timing of reopenings. For the reopening status of Maryland's jurisdictions, please visit <https://governor.maryland.gov/recovery/>.

Marylanders are advised to heed all state and local public health guidance:

- All Marylanders who are older and have underlying health conditions which put them at greater risk for COVID-19 are advised to avoid crowds
- Employers should continue to encourage telework for their employees whenever possible
- Everyone should continue wearing masks or face coverings in public areas, businesses, and on public transportation
- Marylanders should continue practicing physical distancing, staying six feet apart when possible

Information about the Hogan administration's ongoing response to COVID-19 is available at <https://governor.maryland.gov/coronavirus/>.

What are risk factors for serious illness from COVID-19?

Everyone is at risk for COVID-19. However, symptoms can range from mild to severe and may have different complications for each person.

Older people, age 60 and above, and those with pre-existing medical conditions have a higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19. Examples of pre-existing medical conditions include: cancer, diabetes, heart disease or other conditions impacting the immune system's ability to fight germs.

While older people and those with pre-existing conditions are at a higher risk, current MDH data shows that the majority of infections are in adults under 60 years of age. People of all ages need to practice social distancing to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

How does COVID-19 spread?

COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly through close contact from person to person. People who are infected but do not show symptoms can also spread the virus to others.

Close contact is described by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as being within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period starting from 2 days before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic patients, 2 days prior to test specimen collection) until the time the patient is isolated. Cumulative total can be determined by adding individual exposures over a 24-hour period (e.g., three 5-minute exposures for a total of 15 minutes).

- COVID-19 most commonly spreads during close contact
 - People who are physically near (within 6 feet) a person with COVID-19 or have direct contact with that person are at greatest risk of infection.
 - When people with COVID-19 cough, sneeze, sing, talk, or breathe they produce respiratory droplets.
 - Infections occur mainly through exposure to respiratory droplets when a person is in close contact with someone who has COVID-19.

- Respiratory droplets cause infection when they are inhaled or deposited on mucous membranes, such as those that line the inside of the nose and mouth.
- COVID-19 can sometimes be spread by airborne transmission
 - There is evidence that under certain conditions, people with COVID-19 seem to have infected others who were more than 6 feet away within enclosed spaces that had inadequate ventilation.
 - The amount of infectious smaller droplet and particles produced by the people with COVID-19 became concentrated enough to spread the virus to other people. The people who were infected were in the same space during the same time or shortly after the person with COVID-19 had left.
 - Available data indicate that it is much more common for the virus that causes COVID-19 to spread through close contact with a person who has COVID-19 than through airborne transmission.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Symptoms, or combinations of symptoms, that may appear 2-14 days after exposure include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

What is the difference between the flu and COVID-19?

Because some of the symptoms of flu and COVID-19 are similar, it may be hard to tell the difference between them based on symptoms alone, and testing may be needed to help confirm a diagnosis. Flu and COVID-19 share many characteristics, but there are some key differences between the two.

- Signs and Symptoms: Both COVID-19 and the flu have common symptoms like those listed above. But, COVID-19, unlike the flu, may include change in or loss of taste or smell.
- When Symptoms Appear After Exposure: If a person has COVID-19, it could take them longer to develop symptoms than if they had flu. Typically, a person with the flu develops symptoms anywhere from 1 to 4 days after infection. A person with COVID-19 may typically develop symptoms 5 days after being infected, but symptoms can appear between 2 and 14 days after infection.

For more information, see the CDC [Similarities and Differences between Flu and COVID-19](#).

What do I need to know about the flu season during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Getting a flu vaccine during the 2020-2021 influenza season is more important than ever because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Flu vaccination is especially important for adults 65 years and older, who account for most hospitalizations and deaths from flu and from COVID-19.

For flu information and resources in Maryland, visit <https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/influenza/Pages/home.aspx>. Read more from the CDC [Protect Your Health This Flu Season](#).

What should I do if I think I am sick with COVID-19?

If you become sick with fever, cough or have difficulty breathing, contact your health care provider, especially if you are over 60 years of age or have pre-existing medical conditions. If you do not have a health care provider, contact your local health department. Follow these steps:

- Call your health care provider, local health department or emergency room before you go
- Tell them about your symptoms, any recent travel and close contacts (such as people in your household)
- Wear a mask

If someone has COVID-19, what will happen to them?

The vast majority of people recover from this infection. Most people will have mild or moderate symptoms. Most people may be advised to recover at home and isolate themselves from others. These individuals should call their physicians or health care practitioners if their symptoms get worse.

Some COVID-19 infections can lead to serious illness, and in some cases death. If someone has a more serious illness from COVID-19, they may be admitted to the hospital.

Should I wear a face mask?

On September 1, Gov. Hogan announced further amendments to the statewide masking order that has been in effect since April 18. All Marylanders over age 5 should continue wearing face coverings in indoor public areas, retail stores, outdoors when unable to maintain social distancing, and on public transportation. Face coverings are also required in offices of physicians and dentists, hospitals, pharmacies, and laboratories; and at work in any area where interaction with others is likely such as shared areas of commercial offices. Face coverings should cover both your nose and your chin to properly protect against infection. Read the order at

<https://governor.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Gatherings-12th-AMENDED-9.1.20.pdf>

Masks and face coverings can be made from household items and include wearing a scarf or bandanna that covers the nose and mouth. The CDC has detailed guidance and instructions regarding homemade masks and face coverings available at

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>

Masks and face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance. People with disabilities who are unable to wear a mask are provided

reasonable accommodations per the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The masks and face coverings recommended are not surgical masks or N-95 respirators. Those are critical supplies that must continue to be reserved for healthcare workers and other medical first responders, as recommended by current CDC guidance. The CDC has also advised that face coverings with ventilators should be avoided.

Should I cancel plans to travel?

MDH issued a public health advisory for out-of-state travel. Under the advisory, Marylanders are strongly advised against traveling to states with positivity rates of 10% or higher. Anyone traveling from these states should get tested and self-quarantine while awaiting results.

The public health advisory applies to personal, family, or business travel of any kind. Marylanders are advised to postpone or cancel travel to these areas until their positivity rates decline. Read the travel advisory at

<https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/Documents/07.29.2020%20-%20MDH%20Notice%20-%20Out%20of%20State%20Travel%20Advisory.pdf>.

At this time, the CDC warns that travel increases your chance of getting and spreading COVID-19. Staying home is the best way to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.

The CDC warns: You can get COVID-19 during your travels. You may feel well and not have any symptoms, but you can still spread COVID-19 to others. You and your travel companions (including [children](#)) may spread COVID-19 to other people including your family, friends, and community for 14 days after you were exposed to the virus.

Don't travel if [you are sick](#) or [if you have been around someone with COVID-19 in the past 14 days](#). Don't travel with someone who is sick.

If you must travel:

- Avoid contact with sick people.
- Wear a cloth face covering in public.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- It is especially important to clean hands after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose.
- Avoid close contact with others.
- Avoid traveling if you are sick.

People who are at increased risk for serious illness are also advised to avoid nonessential air travel.

CDC recommends travelers [defer all cruise ship travel worldwide](#).

Visit the CDC travel advisory site to check on current travel warnings if you are planning a trip

abroad: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>.

What can I do to protect myself and others?

Take everyday preventive steps to slow the spread of COVID-19:

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol if soap and water are not available
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, your sleeve or your elbow
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using standard cleaning practices
- Practice social distancing — keep distance between yourself and others and avoid crowds
- Cover your mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when around others
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- If you are sick, stay home, except when seeking medical care

What is social distancing?

The best way to slow the spread of COVID-19 is through “social distancing,” which means avoiding close contact with others. Social distancing can take many forms, depending on your lifestyle and your family or living situation. Social distancing can include the following habits and steps:

- Avoid handshaking, hugging and other intimate types of greeting
- Avoid non-essential travel (your health care provider may have specific guidance for your situation)
- Avoid crowds, especially in poorly ventilated spaces
- Work from home if possible for your work situation
- Avoid unnecessary errands — consider ways to have essential items, like food and other household supplies, brought to you through delivery services or through family or social networks

It is recommended that those at a high risk of becoming seriously ill from COVID-19 stay home as much as possible and contact their health care provider.

While social distancing and self-quarantine are needed to limit and control the spread of the disease, social connectedness is important. Virtual resources can and should be used during this time. Talk to your friends and family on the phone or over video to stay connected.

Is there a vaccine or medicine I can get for COVID-19?

Not yet, because COVID-19 is a new disease. However, many experts are at work developing one. As with any new vaccine, it must be tested to make certain it is safe and effective. There is also no specific medicine currently available to cure COVID-19. However, people who have COVID-19 should seek medical care to help lessen the severity of their symptoms.

How can I be more prepared for COVID-19?

- Have an adequate supply of non-prescriptive drugs and other health supplies on hand,

- including pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough and cold medicines
- Check your regular prescription drugs to make sure you have an adequate supply; refill your prescriptions if needed
- Have a thermometer, tissues and hand sanitizer in case you become ill and must stay at home to recover
- Talk with family members and loved ones about how they would be cared for if they got sick and what will be needed to care for them at home
- Have a two-week supply of water and food available at home

Can I get tested for COVID-19?

State officials encourage anyone who wants to be tested for COVID-19 to get tested, including [people who do not have symptoms](#).

For more information about COVID-19 testing and a list of testing sites in Maryland, please visit covidtest.maryland.gov.

Will the Maryland Department of Health test animals for coronavirus?

In accordance with current federal guidelines, the Maryland Department of Health will not be testing the general companion animal population. To date, there is no evidence that domestic animals, including pets, can spread the SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) virus. Because the situation is ever-evolving, public and animal health officials may decide to test certain animals out of an abundance of caution. The decision to test will be made collaboratively between local, state and/or federal public and animal health officials.

For more information, please visit the AVMA COVID-19 website at <https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/covid-19>.

Is there anything else I should know?

Do not stigmatize people of any specific ethnicities or racial background. Viruses do not target people from specific populations, ethnicities or racial backgrounds.

Stay informed and seek information from reliable, official sources. Be wary of myths, rumors and misinformation circulating online and elsewhere. Health information shared through social media is frequently inaccurate, unless coming from an official, reliable source such as the CDC, MDH or local health departments.

Are there additional resources available for specific groups, such as businesses?

The CDC provides current information about COVID-19 at [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).

Businesses

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-business-response.html>

Pregnant Women, those who are breastfeeding, and children

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/pregnant-women.html>

Travelers

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/faqs.html>

Weekly Updates

To receive the weekly email about COVID-19, enter your email address and type “COVID-19” in the search box at this URL:

https://tools.cdc.gov/campaignproxyservice/subscriptions.aspx?topic_id=USCDC_2067