

COVID-19 FAQs

High-Risk Populations

Q: What does it mean to be high-risk?

A: High-risk populations are more susceptible to severe illness if they have COVID-19. They are not necessarily more susceptible to catching the virus that causes the disease.

Q: Am I at higher risk because of my age?

A: The risk for severe illness from COVID-19 increases with age. For example, people in their 50s are at higher risk for severe illness than people in their 40s and people in their 60s or 70s are, in general, at higher risk for severe illness than people in their 50s. The greatest risk for severe illness from COVID-19 is among those aged 85 or older.

Q: What other factors make someone high-risk?

A: You are at increased risk if you have: chronic kidney disease; COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease); and immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from a solid organ transplant; obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 30 or higher); sickle cell disease, type 2 diabetes; or serious heart conditions, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, or cardiomyopathies. Also, children who are medically complex, who have neurologic, genetic, or metabolic conditions, or who have congenital heart disease are at higher risk than other children.

It is possible a number of other conditions could increased risk, including: moderate to severe asthma; cerebrovascular disease (affects blood vessels and blood supply to the brain); cystic fibrosis; hypertension or high blood pressure; and immunocompromised state from a blood or bone marrow transplant, immune deficiencies, HIV, or use of corticosteroids, or other immune weakening medicines; neurologic conditions, such as dementia; liver disease; pregnancy; pulmonary fibrosis (having damaged or scarred lung tissues); smoking; thalassemia (a type of blood disorder); or type 1 diabetes.

Q: What is severe illness?

A: Severity typically means how much impact a condition has on your body's function. People with COVID-19 have experienced a range of reactions, from little to no symptoms/illness to critical, life-threatening illness, usually involving the lungs. High-risk people are more likely to require hospitalization, intensive care, or a ventilator to help them breathe. Severe illness also increases risk of death.

Q: If I am high risk what should I do or not do to prevent COVID-19?

A: Limit your interactions with other people as much as possible. If you do interact with others, be extra vigilant about taking the recommended precautions, such as washing your hands frequently, disinfecting high-touch areas in your home often, and staying 6 feet from others. Stay home, including working from home, except for medical appointments. Use online shipping/delivery services for necessities such as food, prescriptions, and hygiene and sanitation supplies, or ask someone else to do your grocery shopping, pick up your prescriptions, and perform other errands. If you must go out, use drive-thru services and curbside pickup whenever possible or go at non-peak times or during specified hours for high-risk groups. Stay 6 feet from all others whenever possible. Wear a cloth face covering/mask and avoid others who are not wearing cloth face coverings. Carry hand sanitizer and tissues and immediately sanitize hands after handling items. Wash hands as soon as you arrive home.

Q: Will a cloth face covering protect me?

A: Face coverings are strongly recommended because they can potentially prevent transmission from people with COVID-19 to others. The disease can be transmitted even if carriers have no symptoms and are unaware they have the disease. Do not wear a cloth face covering if it is unadvised for health reasons, such as breathing difficulties. Find additional information on coverings [here](#) and [here](#). Guidance on children wearing face coverings can be found [here](#).

Q: Can I go to regular doctor appointments?

A: If you have a medical appointment, or dentist or eyecare appointment, call your healthcare provider before going. Your provider will offer guidance to help you determine risk and decide whether you need to make a visit. When possible, use video or telephone medical services.

Q: Should I avoid the hospital? What if I have an emergency not related to COVID-19?

A: Do not avoid necessary care. If you have an emergency, call 911 and tell the dispatcher about your high-risk or underlying condition. At a hospital or other healthcare facility, inform staff right away of your high-risk or underlying condition. Emergency departments and other facilities have contingency infection prevention plans to protect you from getting COVID-19 if you need care for your underlying condition.

Q: What if I get sick?

A: If you have [symptoms of COVID-19](#) or other concerning symptoms, contact a healthcare provider right away — no longer than 24 hours — and provide details. It is important that you are under care as soon as possible.

Q: Can I visit family members, friends, or neighbors?

A: In general, your risk increases the number of people you interact with, the more closely you interact, and the length of the interaction. Visit outdoors if possible. Arrange tables and chairs to allow for 6-foot

social distancing. (People from the same household can be in groups together and don't need to be 6 feet apart from each other.) Don't shake hands, elbow bump, or hug. Wear cloth face coverings and, if possible, avoid others who are not wearing cloth face coverings. Have everyone wash hands or use hand sanitizer at the beginning and end of visits and before eating food. Encourage your visitors to bring their own food and drinks. Clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces and any shared items between use. If you choose to use any shared items that are reusable, wash, clean, and sanitize them after the event. Do not visit if you or your visitors have COVID-19 symptoms or have been in close contact with COVID-19.

Q: What if I am overwhelmed being isolated, anxious or depressed?

A: If you are struggling emotionally or mentally, help is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call the COVID-19 CareLine at 1-800-720-9616.

Q: What if I have to go to work?

A: Notify your employer of your high-risk status and ask for accommodations or a change in position to keep you away from others as much as possible. Wear a face covering. Whenever possible stay at least 6 feet from other people. Wash your hands often, try not to touch your face, and frequently disinfect work areas and high-touch items in your workplace with disinfecting cleanser. Don't share work materials or equipment, especially equipment used near the face. Don't congregate with others in breakrooms or other areas. Avoid public or shared transportation if possible. Monitor yourself for [COVID-19 symptoms](#) and stay home and call your healthcare provider if you experience any or otherwise feel sick.

Q: What about the people I live with? What if they go out to work or for necessities?

A: It is especially important for people who live with someone at increased risk to protect themselves from getting COVID-19. They should limit your interactions with other people as much as possible. And take the above preventative precautions when they do interact.

Find additional information on living with high-risk conditions [here](#). Related information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, including guidance on specific conditions, can be found [here](#).

Updated June 25, 2020.

For additional information, visit coronavirus.ohio.gov.

For answers to your COVID-19 questions, call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH (1-833-427-5634).

Your mental health is just as important as your physical health. If you or a loved one are experiencing anxiety related to the coronavirus pandemic, help is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call the COVID-19 CareLine at 1-800-720-9616.

Protect yourself and others from COVID-19 by taking these precautions.

PREVENTION

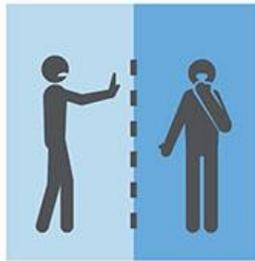
For additional information call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH or visit coronavirus.ohio.gov.



STAY HOME EXCEPT FOR WORK AND OTHER NEEDS



WEAR A FACE COVERING WHEN GOING OUT



PRACTICE SOCIAL DISTANCING OF AT LEAST 6 FEET FROM OTHERS



SHOP AT NON-PEAK HOURS



WASH HANDS OFTEN WITH WATER AND SOAP (20 SECONDS OR LONGER)



AVOID TOUCHING YOUR EYES, NOSE, OR MOUTH WITH UNWASHED HANDS OR AFTER TOUCHING SURFACES



COVER YOUR MOUTH WITH A TISSUE OR SLEEVE WHEN COUGHING OR SNEEZING



CLEAN AND DISINFECT "HIGH-TOUCH" SURFACES OFTEN



DON'T WORK WHEN SICK



CALL BEFORE VISITING YOUR DOCTOR