

COVID-19: Reducing Risk

Keeping Safe & Preventing Spread

The following information is to help people understand who is most at risk of getting infected and sick from COVID-19 and which situations are riskier. It outlines what steps people can take to stay safe and slow the spread of COVID-19.

To see what the current LA County community COVID-19 level is click [here](#).

WHO IS MOST AT RISK?

People who are not vaccinated are at the highest risk of getting infected with COVID-19. Unvaccinated adults who are older or who have [certain medical conditions](#) are at highest risk of severe COVID-19 disease. In addition, some people with [severely weakened immune systems](#) can get very sick from COVID-19 even if they are vaccinated.

Most people who are fully vaccinated are well protected from getting very sick and dying from COVID-19. [Booster doses](#) provide added protection. When vaccinated people get infected with COVID-19, they usually get mild symptoms, if any. But they can still spread the virus to other people.

WHICH SITUATIONS ARE RISKIER?

Understanding how the COVID-19 virus is spread is important. It will help you to assess your risk and take steps to protect yourself in different situations.

The 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 on their eyes, nose, or mouth. A person's risk of getting infected goes up the closer they are to someone with COVID-19. Enclosed places with poor air flow can also 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.



This is why masks are important. They lower the number of respiratory droplets people release into the air AND also the number that they breathe in.

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.

Knowing the level of spread in your area can help you decide what protective measures to take. Everyone needs to take extra precautions when the risk is high. When the risk is low, you can make decisions based on personal preference and comfort level. You should also consider your own level of risk and the level of risk to others in your household or workplace. Consider the following:

- Do you live with others who have a health condition that puts them at higher risk for severe illness from COVID?

- Do you live with anyone who is unvaccinated? This includes young children who are not yet eligible for vaccines.
- Does anyone in your home work in a setting with vulnerable people who are at higher risk of severe illness from COVID?

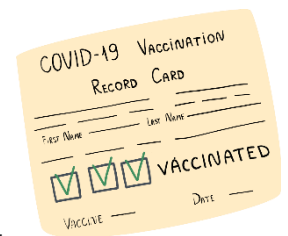
To learn about the current situation in LA County, see [COVID-19 community risk level](#).

There are certain places where COVID-19 spreads more easily

- **Closed spaces** with poor air flow.
- **Crowded places** with many people nearby
- **Close contact settings** especially where people are talking (or breathing heavily) close together

HOW TO REDUCE THE RISK OF COVID-19

- **Get vaccinated and get a booster when you are eligible.** It is the best way to protect against COVID-19 (see [Vaccination](#) below).
- **Wear a mask that fits and filters well.** See ph.lacounty.gov/masks for more information on the types of masks and mask wearing rules and recommendations in Los Angeles County. If you are at [high risk for severe disease](#) or if you are around people who are at high risk, it is very important to wear a highly effective mask indoors and in crowded outdoor places. Children under the age of 2 should not wear a mask.
- **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. See ph.lacounty.gov/covidmedicines for more information.
- **Avoid crowded places.** Being in crowds, especially indoors, puts you at a higher risk. If you need to be indoors, try to go during non-peak hours and wear a more protective mask. Limit how long you are there.
- **Improve air flow.** Go outside. Avoid indoor spaces with poor air flow as much as possible. Open windows and doors, use fans and portable air cleaners, run heating and air, and upgrade filters. (See CDC [Improving Ventilation in Your Home](#).)
- **Choose outdoor spaces** for social and fitness activities.
- **Get a COVID-19 viral test** before gathering indoors with others who are not in your household. This is most important if you will be with people who are at high risk of severe illness, especially if you are not fully vaccinated and boosted or have been in crowded indoor places in the past two weeks. Visit ph.lacounty.gov/covidtests to learn more about when to get a test.
- **Keep your distance.** Use two arms lengths as your guide (about 6 feet) for social distancing with people outside your household when you are not sure that they are vaccinated.
- **Socialize with the same set of friends and relatives** rather than mixing with many different people who are not vaccinated.

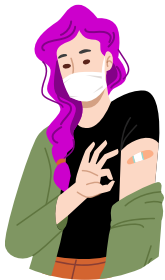


- **Be flexible.** Be willing to change your plans or leave if you find yourself in a place where COVID-19 can spread more easily. For example, indoors in a loud crowded restaurant with a lot of people who are not wearing masks.
- **Wash your hands and/or use hand sanitizer often** - especially after being in public spaces where surfaces are touched by many people. Avoid eating and touching your face with unwashed hands.
- **Stay home when sick.** If you have symptoms¹ of COVID-19, talk to a doctor, and get a 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 ph.lacounty.gov/covidcare.
- **Delay travel until you and the people you are traveling with are fully vaccinated and have received their booster, if eligible.** Be sure to review and follow the CDC [domestic](#) and [international](#) travel guidance. See [LAC DPH Travel Advisory and Guidance](#) for more information.



VACCINATION

Vaccination is the best way to protect yourself and your loved ones from COVID-19. It will slow the spread of COVID-19 including variants of the virus.



- If you are already vaccinated, encourage your family, friends, coworkers, and neighbors to get vaccinated. This includes recommended additional doses or booster doses. See [COVID-19 Vaccine Schedules](#).
- If you are not yet fully vaccinated, consider getting vaccinated now. Vaccines are safe, effective, and free to everyone regardless of immigration status. Talk with your doctor about any concerns.

Vaccines are widely available across LA without an appointment. Visit www.VaccinateLACounty.com to find a location near you. Call 1-833-540-0473 if you need help making an appointment, need transportation to a vaccination site, or are homebound. Phone lines are open from 8am to 8:30pm 7 days a week. Information is also available in many languages 24/7 by calling 2-1-1.

¹ Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after being exposed to the virus and may include: fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing, new loss of taste or smell, fatigue, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headache, sore throat, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea. This list does not include all possible symptoms of COVID-19. Some people with COVID-19 never get symptoms. Visit ph.lacounty.gov/covidcare to learn more about what to do if you are sick.