

What you need to know about Coronavirus (COVID-19)



BALTIMORE
CITY HEALTH
DEPARTMENT

Last Updated March 17, 2020

Baltimoreans just like you are already taking steps to protect one another—you should too! This is a rapidly changing situation. The information provided here is accurate as of 3/17/20. Please visit health.baltimorecity.gov for up to date information.

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 stands for Coronavirus Disease 2019, a disease caused by a new respiratory virus.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Symptoms of COVID-19 include:



Fever above
100.4°F



Cough



Difficulty
breathing

How is COVID-19 spread?

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.



Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).



Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

It is also possible to be infected from droplets of virus on surfaces, such as doorknobs and handrails, and then touching your face. It's not known how long the virus can live on surfaces, but could be hours to days.

Is there a vaccine or treatment for COVID-19?

No, at this time there is no vaccine or treatment for COVID-19

Should I be tested for COVID-19?

Not everyone needs a test for COVID-19.

Testing is currently limited for those who are:



Severely ill



Been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19



Lived in or recently traveled from an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19

If you feel sick with a fever and cough or difficulty in breathing, stay home. If you have a risk factor for more severe disease (age over 60 or a chronic medical condition), monitor your symptoms. If your fever worsens or you develop shortness of breath or chest pain, call your doctor or get to the nearest ER.

Where can I be tested for COVID-19?



Not everyone needs a test. Testing is currently limited. **Please do not go to the ER if you have mild symptoms only.** If you have mild symptoms, you should stay home and call your primary care doctor.

If you do not have a doctor, you can establish care with a primary care doctor. You can call **2-1-1** or go to health.baltimorecity.gov/health-clinics-services/primary-care-clinics-uninsured for a list of community health centers for primary care

Only those with severe respiratory disease or other illness are recommended to go to the ER.

Avoid overcrowding Emergency Rooms and allow severe cases to be seen in the ER.

I have all the symptoms of COVID-19 but I cannot find a test/my doctor won't test me. What should I do?

If your doctor thought you likely had COVID-19, but was not able to test for it, stay in your home.

To prevent others from getting ill, do not go to work or school, and limit other social interactions (such as shopping, religious services, and other social gatherings).

If you must go out, avoid using public transportation and ride shares.



If you start feeling worse, call your healthcare provider. **If you have difficulty breathing, chest pain, or other concerning symptoms, call 9-1-1 or go to the emergency room.**

What should I do if I am sick (fever, and respiratory symptoms)?

More information can be found here: cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/steps-when-sick.html

- ✓ Stay home except to get medical care
- ✓ Call ahead to your doctor
- ✓ Wear a facemask if you are around others
- ✓ Cover your coughs and sneezes
- ✓ Wash hands often with soap and water

Do not go to the ER if you have only mild symptoms.

For additional recommendations and resources, please see:

CDC: (Note that URL's have been shortened)

cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-home-care.html

cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/prevention.html

How dangerous is COVID-19?

The vast majority of people recover from this infection. Most people who become sick with COVID-19 have a mild illness and recover well.

80% of those with COVID-19 have mild disease and recover.

20% of people (two out of 10) who are infected with COVID-19 have more serious disease, requiring hospitalization.

Older people age 60 and older and those with pre-existing medical conditions have a greater risk for serious illness.

Who is at higher risk of getting very sick from COVID-19?

Some people are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. This includes:



Older adults (60 years old and older)

People who have serious chronic medical conditions like:



Heart disease



Diabetes



Lung disease



Chronic Kidney disease

What are recommendations to prevent getting ill for those at higher risk of severe disease?

If you are at higher risk of severe disease from COVID-19 (age 60 years or older or with an underlying medical condition) it is extra important for you to take actions to reduce your risk of getting sick with the disease.

- ✓ Prepare for a potential local outbreak of COVID-19 in our community. This includes stocking up on supplies, food, and prescription medications.
- ✓ When in public, keep away from those who are sick and limit close contact
- ✓ Wash your hands often especially after being around public areas and high-touch surfaces in public places (elevator buttons, door handles, handrails, handshaking with others, etc.)

As of **3/17/2020**, we have a local outbreak of COVID-19. Be prepared to be able to:

- ✓ Stay home as much as possible
 - ✓ Consider ways of getting food brought to your house through family or friends
 - ✓ Stay in touch with others by phone and other means of communication
 - ✓ Watch for early warning signs of disease, including fever, cough and shortness of breath. **If you feel like you are developing symptoms, call your doctor.**
-



Should I avoid large events?

Older adults and those with underlying medical conditions are advised to avoid crowded places.

Current state guidance is to avoid gathering over 10 people and current federal mandate is to avoid gatherings over 10 people.



Should I avoid cruise ships?

CDC recommends that travelers, particularly those with underlying medical conditions and those age 65 and older should defer all cruise ship travel worldwide.

Should I cancel plans to travel abroad?



CDC updates its travel advisories. Visit the CDC travel advisory site to check on current travel warnings if you are planning a trip abroad.

More information can be found here:

[cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html)

CDC recommends that older adults and those with underlying medical conditions avoid non-essential air travel.

What are the health department's current recommendations for women who are pregnant?



There is very little specific information about pregnant women and COVID-19. In general, pregnant women can be more susceptible to viruses. Pregnant women should engage in usual preventive actions to avoid infection like washing hands often and avoiding people who are sick.

What are the health department's current recommendations for people living with HIV?

Over half the people living with HIV are over 50 years of age. This means paying particular attention to and following the guidance for prevention of infection.

The risk of complications from COVID-19 increases for people with weaker immune systems from HIV. Those are people who are untreated, or who have a lower T cell count and a higher viral load.

- ✓ Be sure to take your medications and work to keep the virus controlled.
- ✓ **Be prepared.** Try to maintain a 30-day supply of medications on hand at all times.
- ✓ Have a plan to get medical attention, in case of quarantine or isolation. This can include telehealth and physician on-line portals.

What are the health department's current recommendations for the general public?

There are things everyone can do to protect themselves and their family:



Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.

If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.



Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.



Avoid close contact with people who are sick.



Make backup plans for your child with the temporary closure of schools and/or childcare facilities.



Discuss emergency operations plans with your employer.



Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, counter-tops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks.

How can I be more prepared for COVID-19? What else can I plan for?

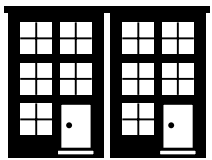
- ✓ Have an adequate supply of non-prescriptive drugs and other health supplies on hand, including pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough and cold medicines.
- ✓ Check your regular prescription drugs to make sure you have an adequate supply; refill your prescriptions if needed.
- ✓ Have a thermometer, 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.
- ✓ Plan for school and daycare closures.

I just returned from traveling internationally. Do I need to stay at home?

If you have returned from a country with widespread, ongoing transmission, stay home for 14 days from the time you left the country and practice social distancing.

Social distancing includes avoiding contact with others. Do not go to school or work for this 14-day period. Do not take public transportation, taxis, or ride shares. Avoid crowded places such as shopping centers and movie theaters and limit your activities in public. Keep your distance from others (about 6 feet). Discuss your work situation with your employer before returning to work.

More information, including a list of countries and instructions for social distancing can be found here: [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/after-travel-precautions.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/after-travel-precautions.html)



How can I clean my house?

Clean frequently touched surfaces (such as tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, toilets, faucets, and sinks) with household cleaners and EPA-registered disinfectants that are appropriate for the surface, following label instructions. Labels contain instructions for safe and effective use of the cleaning product including precautions you should take when applying the product, such as wearing gloves and making sure you have good ventilation during use of the product.

More information can be found here: [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/home/cleaning-disinfection.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/home/cleaning-disinfection.html)



What does community transmission mean?

Community spread means people have been infected with the virus in an area, including some who are not sure how or where they became infected.

Community transmission is important because it means that different control and prevention methods may be warranted.

What does social distancing mean and why is it important?



Social distancing means trying to limit interactions with others that are most likely to spread COVID-19 with other people. This includes avoiding contact with others:

- ✗ Do not go to school or work
- ✗ Do not take public transportation, taxis, or ride shares.
- ✗ Avoid crowded places such as shopping centers and movie theaters and limit your activities in public.
- ✓ Keep your distance from others (about 6 feet).

Who should wear a mask?



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to prevent themselves from COVID-19.

A facemask should be used by people who have COVID-19 and who have symptoms such as fever or cough. This is to protect others from getting infected.

Masks should also be worn by healthcare workers and those taking care of someone infected with COVID-19 at home.



Is it safe to use public transportation?

Public transportation remains open and operational in Baltimore. Wash your hands often especially after being around public areas and high-touch surfaces in public places (elevator buttons, door handles, handrails, etc.)

Try to avoid public transportation if you have fever or respiratory symptoms, to prevent the spread of illness to others.

Avoid or limit use of public transportation if possible if you have one of the risk factors for severe COVID-19 disease.

What is being done to assist homeless individuals?

Guidance is being distributed to homeless shelters to include information on screening individuals for illness and actions to take if individuals are ill. Residents and staff at shelters are encouraged to wash their hands frequently. Additional guidance can be found here. [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/index.html)

What can be done for schools, places of business, and faith-based organizations?

Guidance on preventing the spread of COVID-19 in communities can be found here: [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/index.html)

Where else is COVID-19 outside the United States?



COVID-19 has been documented around the world, including in Europe, North and South America, South-East Asia, Africa, Mediterranean, and Western Pacific countries.

What is Baltimore City Health Department doing about COVID-19?

Educating the public and ensuring public health messages are distributed

- ✓ Coordinating with the city's hospitals, clinics, and other doctor's offices to coordinate efforts around testing and treatment of patients
- ✓ Doing routine disease investigations for potential COVID-19 cases in conjunction with Maryland Department of Health
- ✓ Coordinating with other city agencies including the Fire Department and EMS, Police Department, City Schools, Mayor's Office, MOEM, and others
- ✓ Working with community partners, especially those who interact with high risk populations.

What are some additional resources of reliable information?

CDC website: [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html)

MDH website: [coronavirus.maryland.gov/](https://www.coronavirus.maryland.gov/)

BCHD website: bit.ly/BaltCOVID



Bernard C. "Jack" Young
Mayor

**BALTIMORE
CITY HEALTH
DEPARTMENT**