What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a viral respiratory disease that can lead to lower respiratory illnesses like pneumonia and bronchitis. COVID-19 can cause severe illness and death. Currently, there are vaccines approved to prevent severe illness from COVID-19.

How is COVID-19 spread?

- Close contact with an infected person (within six feet)
- Inhalation of respiratory droplets from when people with COVID-19 talk, cough, or sneeze
- Can be spread by people infected with COVID-19 who are not showing symptoms

What are the symptoms?

- 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

Symptoms may appear 2–14 days after exposure to the virus.

Am I at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19?

You are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 if you

- Are 65 years of age or older.
- Live in a nursing home or long-term care facility.
- Have underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled, including:
  - Heart conditions such as heart failure and coronary artery disease.
  - Lung disease like asthma, emphysema, and COPD.
  - Weakened immune system such as cancer patients with hematologic (blood) malignancies, cancer patients in active chemotherapy, people with HIV/AIDS, and smokers.
  - Diabetes and obesity.

I fall into a high-risk category. How do I prevent COVID-19 infection?

- Get vaccinated to prevent severe illness from COVID-19.
- Avoid close contact with people outside of your household and people who are sick.
- Stay at least 6 feet away from people outside of your household.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a mask when in public.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds—if soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Whenever possible, avoid touching high-touch surfaces—i.e. door handles, handrails, countertops.
- Wash your hands after being in public places.
- Avoid touching your face (nose, eyes, mouth).
- Regularly disinfect your home, paying close attention to high-touch surfaces, i.e. doorknobs, light switches, desks, cell phones, and countertops.
- Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-approved household disinfectants. Some examples include:
  - Clorox Multi Surface Cleaner + Bleach
  - PURELL Professional Surface Disinfectant Wipes
  - Lysol Disinfectant Spray
  - Lysol Clean & Fresh Multi-Surface Cleaner
  - For a comprehensive Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) list, visit https://www.americanchemistry.com/Novel-Coronavirus-Fighting-Products-List.pdf
- If COVID-19 is spreading in your community, stay home as much as possible.
- Avoid all non-essential travel.
How do I prepare for COVID-19 in my community if I am high-risk?

- **Continue your medications** and do not change your treatment plan without talking to your doctor.
- **Have the necessary supplies on hand.**
  - Contact your healthcare provider to ask about obtaining extra necessary medications and other health guidance.
  - Consider mail-ordering your medications.
  - Have over-the-counter medicines and supplies to treat fever and other symptoms of COVID-19.
    - Aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid), Tylenol (acetaminophen), Aleve (naproxen) etc.
- **Have enough household items and groceries including toiletries** on hand to stay at home for a prolonged period of time or have a plan with your family and community to ensure you can get the supplies you need.
- **Make a plan you can follow.**
  - Consider who needs to be included in your plan.
    - Identify aid organizations in your community to contact in case you need support or resources.
  - Create an emergency contact list.
    - Consider including family, friends, neighbors, carpool drivers, health care providers (physician, nurse, doctor), teachers, employers, etc.
- Call your healthcare provider if you have any concerns about your underlying medical conditions or if you get sick and think that you may have COVID-19. If you need emergency help, call 911.
- **Stay up to date on your vaccinations** and have your vaccination records on hand.
- If you live alone, stay in touch with others by phone, text, or email.⁶

Should I get a COVID-19 vaccine?

- The Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson’s Janssen COVID-19 vaccines were approved for use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and have been shown to be safe and effective at preventing severe illness from COVID-19.⁷
- These COVID-19 vaccines may be given to people with underlying conditions, but it is important to remember that there is not enough safety data to rule out all risks.⁸
- Your healthcare provider is your best resource for your medical conditions. Speak with your healthcare provider if you have any concerns about getting a COVID-19 vaccine.

What do I do if I am high-risk and experiencing symptoms?

- **Monitor your symptoms.**
- **Call your healthcare provider before going to the clinic or hospital.**
  - It may be recommended that you stay home and monitor your symptoms rather than going in.
  - Put on a facemask that covers your nose and mouth before you enter any facility or emergency vehicle.
  - Seek prompt medical attention if your illness is worsening (difficulty breathing or shortness of breath).
- **Separate yourself** from other people in your home.
- **Avoid sharing** household items and regularly clean all high-touch surfaces.⁹
- **Take care of your emotional health.**

References