How to Reduce the Likelihood of Transmission of the Coronavirus



There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. However, as a reminder, CDC always recommends everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, including:

* Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
* Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
* Stay home when you are sick.
* Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
* Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
* Follow CDC’s recommendations for using a facemask.
  + CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.
  + Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is also crucial for [health workers](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/infection-control.html) and [people who are taking care of someone in close settings](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-home-care.html) (at home or in a health care facility).
* Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
  + If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

# When and How to Wash Your Hands

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**Handwashing is one of the best ways to protect yourself and your family from getting sick. Learn when and how you should wash your hands to stay healthy.**

#### **Wash Your Hands Often to Stay Healthy**

You can help yourself and your loved ones stay healthy by washing your hands often, especially during these key times when you are likely to get and spread germs:

* **Before, during,**and**after** preparing food
* **Before** eating food
* **Before**and**after**caring for someone at home who is sick with vomiting or diarrhea
* **Before**and**after** treating a cut or wound
* **After** using the toilet
* **After** changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet
* **After**blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
* **After** touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste
* **After**handling pet food or pet treats
* **After** touching garbage

#### **Follow Five Steps to Wash Your Hands the Right Way**

Washing your hands is easy, and it’s one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of germs. Clean hands can stop germs from spreading from one person to another and throughout an entire community—from your home and workplace to childcare facilities and hospitals.

Follow these five steps every time.

1. **Wet** your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
2. **Lather** your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
3. **Scrub** your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the “Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end twice.
4. **Rinse** your hands well under clean, running water.
5. **Dry** your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

#### **Use Hand Sanitizer When You Can’t Use Soap and Water**

You can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.

Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to get rid of germs in most situations. If soap and water are not readily available, you can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. You can tell if the sanitizer contains at least 60% alcohol by looking at the product label.

**Sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of germs on hands in many situations. However,**

* Sanitizers do **not** get rid of all types of germs.
* Hand sanitizers may not be as effective when hands are visibly dirty or greasy.
* Hand sanitizers might not remove harmful chemicals from hands like pesticides and heavy metals.

**Caution!** Swallowing alcohol-based hand sanitizers can cause alcohol poisoning if more than a couple of mouthfuls are swallowed. Keep it out of reach of young children and supervise their use.

#### **How to use hand sanitizer**

* Apply the gel product to the palm of one hand (read the label to learn the correct amount).
* Rub your hands together.
* Rub the gel over all the surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry. This should take around 20 seconds.

For more information on handwashing, visit CDC’s Handwashing website or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.

Show Me the Science - How to Wash Your Hands



Keeping hands clean is one of the most important steps we can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. Many diseases and conditions are spread by not washing hands with soap and clean, running water. CDC recommends cleaning hands in a specific way to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. The guidance for effective handwashing and use of hand sanitizer was developed based on data from a number of studies.

**Microbes** are all tiny living organisms that may or may not cause disease.

**Germs,** or pathogens, are types of microbes that can cause disease.

1. Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.

**Why?** Because hands could become recontaminated if placed in a basin of standing water that has been contaminated through previous use, clean running water should be used [1](https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/show-me-the-science-handwashing.html#one). However, washing with non-potable water when necessary may still improve health [3](https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/show-me-the-science-handwashing.html#three). The temperature of the water does not appear to affect microbe removal; however, warmer water may cause more skin irritation and is more environmentally costly.

Turning off the faucet after wetting hands saves water, and there are few data to prove whether significant numbers of germs are transferred between hands and the faucet.

Using soap to wash hands is more effective than using water alone because the surfactants in soap lift soil and microbes from skin, and people tend to scrub hands more thoroughly when using soap, which further removes germs.

To date, studies have shown that there is no added health benefit for consumers (this does not include professionals in the healthcare setting) using soaps containing antibacterial ingredients compared with using plain soap. As a result, FDA issued a final rule in September 2016 that 19 ingredients in common “antibacterial” soaps, including triclosan, were no more effective than non-antibacterial soap and water and thus these products are no longer able to be marketed to the general public. This rule does not affect hand sanitizers, wipes, or antibacterial products used in healthcare settings.

2. Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Be sure to lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.

**Why?** Lathering and scrubbing hands creates friction, which helps lift dirt, grease, and microbes from skin.  Microbes are present on all surfaces of the hand, often in particularly high concentration under the nails, so the entire hand should be scrubbed.

3. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice.

**Why?** Determining the optimal length of time for handwashing is difficult because few studies about the health impacts of altering handwashing times have been done. Of those that exist, nearly all have measured reductions in overall numbers of microbes, only a small proportion of which can cause illness, and have not measured impacts on health. Solely reducing numbers of microbes on hands is not necessarily linked to better health [16](https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/show-me-the-science-handwashing.html#sixteen). The optimal length of time for handwashing is also likely to depend on many factors, including the type and amount of soil on the hands and the setting of the person washing hands.  For example, surgeons are likely to come into contact with disease-causing germs and risk spreading serious infections to vulnerable patients, so they may need to wash hands longer than a woman before she prepares her own lunch at home. Nonetheless, evidence suggests that washing hands for about 15-30 seconds removes more germs from hands than washing for shorter periods.

Accordingly, many countries and global organizations have adopted recommendations to wash hands for about 20 seconds (some recommend an additional 20-30 seconds for drying):

4. Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.

**Why?** Soap and friction help lift dirt, grease, and microbes—including disease-causing germs—from skin so they can then be rinsed off of hands. Rinsing the soap away also minimizes skin irritation. Because hands could become re-contaminated if rinsed in a basin of standing water that has been contaminated through previous use, clean running water should be used .While some recommendations include using a paper towel to turn off the faucet after hands have been rinsed, this practice leads to increased use of water and paper towels, and there are no studies to show that it improves health.

5. Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

**Why?** Germs can be transferred more easily to and from wet hands; therefore, hands should be dried after washing. However, the best way to dry hands remains unclear because few studies about hand drying exist, and the results of these studies conflict. Additionally, most of these studies compare overall concentrations of microbes, not just disease-causing germs, on hands following different hand-drying methods. It has not been shown that removing microbes from hands is linked to better health. Nonetheless, studies suggest that using a clean towel or air-drying hands are best.

# Mental Health and Coping During COVID-19

The outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) may be stressful for people and communities. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children.

**Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations.** The emotional impact of an emergency on a person can depend on the person’s characteristics and experiences, the social and economic circumstances of the person and their community, and the availability of local resources. People can become more distressed if they see repeated images or hear repeated reports about the outbreak in the media.

People who may respond more strongly to the stress of a crisis include:

* People who have preexisting mental health conditions including problems with substance use
* Children
* People who are helping with the response to COVID-19, like doctors and other health care providers, or first responders

**Additional information and resources on mental health care can be found at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration website.**

* Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA’s) Disaster Distress Hotline: 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746.
* People with deafness or hearing loss can use their preferred relay service to call 1-800-985-5990.

**Reactions during an infectious disease outbreak can include:**

* Fear and worry about your own health status and that of your loved ones who may have been exposed to COVID-19
* Changes in sleep or eating patterns
* Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
* Worsening of chronic health problems
* Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

**People with preexisting mental health conditions should continue with their treatment plans during an emergency and monitor for any new symptoms. Additional information can be found at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration website.**

Coping with these feelings and getting help when you need it will help you, your family, and your community recover from a disaster. Connect with family, friends, and others in your community. Take care of yourself and each other and know when and how to seek help.

**Call your healthcare provider if stress reactions interfere with your daily activities for several days in a row.**

**Things you can do to support yourself:**

* Avoid excessive exposure to media coverage of COVID-19.
* Take care of your body. Take deep breaths, stretch or meditate. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep and avoid alcohol and drugs.
* Make time to unwind and remind yourself that strong feelings will fade. Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories. It can be upsetting to hear about the crisis and see images repeatedly. Try to do some other activities you enjoy to return to your normal life.
* Connect with others. Share your concerns and how you are feeling with a friend or family member. Maintain healthy relationships.
* Maintain a sense of hope and positive thinking.

Share the facts about COVID-19 and the actual risk to others. People who have returned from areas of ongoing spread more than 14 days ago and do not have symptoms of COVID-19 do not put others at risk.

**What are quarantine and social distancing?**

* Quarantine separates and restricts the movement of people who were exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick.
* **Social distancing**means remaining out of places where people meet or gather, avoiding local public transportation (e.g., bus, subway, taxi, rideshare), and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet or 2 meters) from others.

Sharing accurate information can help calm fears in others and allow you to connect with them.

#### **For parents:**

Children react, in part, on what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal with the COVID-19 calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children. Parents can be more reassuring to others around them, especially children, if they are better prepared.

**Not all children respond to stress in the same way. Some common changes to watch for in children:**

* Excessive crying and irritation
* Returning to behaviors they have outgrown (e.g., toileting accidents or bedwetting)
* Excessive worry or sadness
* Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits
* Irritability and “acting out” behaviors
* Poor school performance or avoiding school
* Difficulty with attention and concentration
* Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past
* Unexplained headaches or body pain
* Use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

**There are many things you can do to support your child:**

* Take time to talk with your child about the COVID-19 outbreak. Answer questions and share facts about COVID-19 in a way that your child can understand.
* Reassure your child that they are safe. Let them know if is ok if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.
* Limit your child’s exposure to media coverage of the event. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.
* Help your child to have a sense of structure. Once it is safe to return to school or child-care, help them return to their regular activity.
* Be a role model; take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members and rely on your social support system.

#### **For responders:**

Responding to COVID-19 can take an emotional toll on you. There are things you can do to reduce secondary traumatic stress (STS) reactions:

* Acknowledge that STS can impact anyone helping families after a traumatic event.
* Learn the symptoms including physical (fatigue, illness) and mental (fear, withdrawal, guilt).
* Allow time for you and your family to recover from responding to the outbreak.
* Create a menu of personal self-care activities that you enjoy, such as spending time with friends and family, exercising, or reading a book.
* Take a break from media coverage of COVID-19.
* Ask for help if you feel overwhelmed or concerned that COVID-19 is affecting your ability to care for your family and patients as you did before the outbreak.

**For people who have been released from quarantine:**

Being separated from others if a health care provider thinks you may have been exposed to COVID-19 can be stressful, even if you do not get sick. Some typical reactions after being released from COVID-19 quarantine can include:

* Mixed emotions, including relief after quarantine
* Fear and worry about your own health status and that of your loved ones who may have been exposed to COVID-19
* Stress from the experience of monitoring yourself, or being monitored by others for signs and symptoms of COVID-19
* Sadness, anger, or frustration because friends or loved ones have unfounded fears of contracting the disease from contact with you, even though you have been determined not to be contagious
* Guilt about not being able to perform normal work or parenting duties during quarantine
* Other emotional or mental health changes

# Taking Care of Your Emotional Health During COVID-19

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###### The outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), may be stressful for people and communities

It is natural to feel stress, anxiety, grief, and worry during and after a disaster. Everyone reacts differently, and your own feelings will change over time. Notice and accept how you feel. Taking care of your emotional health during an emergency will help you think clearly and react to the urgent needs to protect yourself and your family. Self-care during an emergency will help your long-term healing.

**People with preexisting mental health conditions should continue with their treatment plans during an emergency and monitor for any new symptoms. Additional information can be found at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration website.**

* Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA’s) Disaster Distress Hotline: 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746.
* People with deafness or hearing loss can use their preferred relay service to call 1-800-985-5990.

**Take the following steps to cope with a disaster:**

* **Take care of your body**– Try to eat healthy well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, and get plenty of sleep. Avoid alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.
* **Connect with others**– Share your concerns and how you are feeling with a friend or family member. Maintain healthy relationships and build a strong support system.
* **Take breaks**– Make time to unwind and remind yourself that strong feelings will fade. Try taking in deep breaths. Try to do activities you usually enjoy.
* **Stay informed**– When you feel that you are missing information, you may become more stressed or nervous. Watch, listen to, or read the news for updates from officials. Be aware that there may be rumors during a crisis, especially on social media. Always check your sources and turn to reliable sources of information like your local government authorities.
* **Avoid too much exposure to news**– Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories. It can be upsetting to hear about the crisis and see images repeatedly. Try to do enjoyable activities and return to normal life as much as possible and check for updates between breaks.
* **Seek help when needed**– If distress impacts activities of your daily life for several days or weeks, talk to a clergy member, counselor, or doctor, or contact the SAMHSA helpline at **1-800-985-5990**.

**Look out for these common signs of distress:**

* Feelings of numbness, disbelief, anxiety or fear.
* Changes in appetite, energy, and activity levels.
* Difficulty concentrating.
* Difficulty sleeping or nightmares and upsetting thoughts and images.
* Physical reactions, such as headaches, body pains, stomach problems, and skin rashes.
* Worsening of chronic health problems.
* Anger or short-temper.
* Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

If you experience these feelings or behaviors for several days in a row and are unable to carry out normal responsibilities because of them, seek professional help.