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Coronavirus/COVID-19: Important Information and Resources

Centers Plan for Healthy Living is monitoring the coronavirus infection closely and is following the guidance and protocols provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH). We are recommending that you follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s steps to preventing illness which can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention.html>. These steps include, but are not limited to:

- **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 readily available, **use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol**. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth** with unwashed hands.
- **Avoid close contact** with people who are sick
- Put **distance between yourself and other people** if COVID-19 is spreading in your community. This is especially important for [people who are at higher risk of getting very sick](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html) (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>).

Every day health care professionals learn more about COVID-19, so the information is constantly changing, but here is some helpful information from the [NYC Health Department's 3/15/2020 fact sheet](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/imm/coronavirus-factsheet.pdf) (<https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/imm/coronavirus-factsheet.pdf>):

There is widespread community transmission of COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease 2019) happening in New York City. COVID-19 is a respiratory illness (which affects breathing) caused by a new coronavirus. Symptoms can range from mild, such as a sore throat, to severe, such as pneumonia. Most people will not need medical attention for their symptoms. Together we can slow the spread and protect those at higher risk of severe illness and our health care workers from getting sick.

Community transmission means that COVID-19 is circulating in NYC and that we should act as if we are all exposed. If you are sick, you must stay home. All New Yorkers must monitor their health carefully at this time. Only seek health care if you are very sick. We need to make sure people with severe illness will be able to stay in a hospital or intensive care unit if they need to. Even if you are not sick, stay home as much as you can: work from home, study from home and avoid all unnecessary interactions and events.

How does COVID-19 spread?

- The virus can spread to people who are in close contact (within about 6 feet) with an infected person when that person coughs or sneezes.
- The virus is spreading between people with no link to travel or to another positive case.
- Scientists disagree on how long COVID-19 lives on surfaces, but it can live on surfaces that people frequently touch. The virus can then be spread if someone touches their eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Public health officials are still learning about the virus that causes COVID-19, but it is believed that people who are experiencing symptoms (coughing and sneezing) are most likely to transmit the virus to others.

Who is most at risk for COVID-19?

- People who are at most risk for severe illness are people who are over 50 years old or who have other health conditions, including chronic lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, cancer or a weakened immune system.
- People with regular close contact with someone who has or could have COVID-19 are also at higher risk. This includes people who live in the same home, caretakers who work in the home or sexual partners.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

- Commonly reported symptoms include:
 - Fever (temperature over 100.4 degrees F or 38 degrees C)
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath (difficulty breathing)
 - Sore throat

- If you have any of these symptoms, and they are not due to a preexisting health condition like asthma or emphysema, **you may have COVID-19 and you must stay home.**

What should I do if I get sick with COVID-19 symptoms?

- If you have mild to moderate symptoms, stay home. You should not seek medical care or try to get tested. By staying home, you reduce the possibility of transmission to others, including health care workers who are needed to care for the more seriously ill.
- **If you are over 50 years old or have chronic conditions, consult your doctor. They may want to monitor you more closely.**
- **If your symptoms do not go away or get worse after three to four days, consult with your doctor.**
- Stay home for at least seven days after your symptoms started. Make sure that you have been fever-free for three days without the use of fever-reducing drugs, such as Tylenol and ibuprofen. Also, make sure that your cough and sore throat are better before you go back to your routine. If you never had a fever, stay at home for at least three days after your symptoms start improving.
- If you go out to see your doctor, wear a face mask if available. If possible, take a private car, sit in the back seat and roll down the window.
- **If you have more severe symptoms, such as difficulty breathing and very high fever, go to an emergency department. Call 911 if you need help right away.**

How can I protect myself and others from COVID-19?

- Avoid all unnecessary events, travel or interactions. Stay at home as much as you can.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when sneezing or coughing. Do not use your hands.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Do not shake hands. Instead, wave or elbow bump.
- Monitor your health more closely than usual for cold or flu symptoms.
- Create more personal space between yourself and others. This is called social distancing.

How do I practice social (physical) distancing?

- Stay home as much as possible.
- Create more physical space between yourself and others.
- Keep at least 6 feet between yourself and others, whenever possible.
- Do not gather in large crowds.
- Work from home, if possible.
- Avoid all nonessential travel.
- Avoid all nonessential social interactions.

For more information and support:

- For real-time updates, text "COVID" to 692-692. Messages and data rates may apply.
- Visit nyc.gov/coronavirus for additional resources and information.
- If you need a provider, NYC Health and Hospitals provides care to all New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status, insurance status or ability to pay. Call 844-NYC-4NYC (844-692-4692) or 311.
- If you are feeling anxious, stressed or overwhelmed, connect with trained counselors at NYC Well, the City's confidential helpline. Call 888-NYC-WELL (888-692-9355), text "WELL" to 65173. Or chat online at nyc.gov/nycwell.

Here is some additional advice for people at higher risk from the CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>):

Take actions to reduce your risk of getting sick

If you are at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19 because of your age or because you have a serious long-term health problem, it is extra important for you to take actions to reduce your risk of getting sick with the disease.

- Stock up on supplies.
- **Take everyday precautions** to keep space between yourself and others.
- When you go out in public, keep away from others who are sick, limit close contact and wash your hands often.
- **Avoid crowds** as much as possible.
- **Avoid cruise travel** and non-essential air travel.

- **During a COVID-19 outbreak in your community, stay home** as much as possible to further reduce your risk of being exposed.

Have supplies on hand

- **Contact your healthcare provider to ask about obtaining extra necessary medications** to have on hand in case there is an outbreak of COVID-19 in your community and you need to stay home for a prolonged period of time.
- If you cannot get extra medications, consider using mail-order for medications.
- **Be sure you have over-the-counter medicines and medical supplies** (tissues, etc.) to treat fever and other symptoms. Most people will be able to recover from COVID-19 at home.
- **Have enough household items and groceries** on hand so that you will be prepared to stay at home for a period of time.

Have a plan for if you get sick

- **Consult with your health care provider** for more information about [monitoring your health for symptoms suggestive of COVID-19](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-prevent-spread.html#precautions) (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-prevent-spread.html#precautions>).
- **Stay in touch with others by phone or email.** You may need to ask for help from friends, family, neighbors, community health workers, etc. if you become sick.
- **Determine who can care for you** if your caregiver gets sick.

What steps has Centers Plan taken to help protect its members and staff?

- If you've received a call from us recently to schedule your in-person assessment, you'll notice that our team is asking questions to try to find out if you're sick and/or whether or not you've been exposed to COVID-19.
- We have also advised our staff to stay home if they are sick or have been exposed to COVID-19, and those who are able to work from home have been told to do so.
- We will start reaching out to you by phone more often, to check on you, see how you are doing, and provide you with advice if needed.
- As more information and guidance are released by the CDC, CMS and the NYSDOH we will implement and follow that guidance to ensure your safety and the safety of our staff.

More information on the Coronavirus can be found on the Centers for Disease Control and New York State Department of Health websites:

- The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/) (CDC) - <https://www.cdc.gov/>
- The [New York State Department of Health](https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus/) (NYSDOH) - <https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus/>

You can also call New York's direct Coronavirus hotline to speak with an expert about your questions or concerns at 1-888-364-3065.

Our member services and care management teams are available seven days a week from 8 am to 8 pm at:

- 1-855-270-1600 for our MLTC (Managed Long-Term Care) Plan;
- 1-877-940-9330 for our Medicare Advantage Plans; and
- 1-833-274-5627 for our Medicaid Advantage Plus Managed Long-Term Care (MAP) plan
- TTY users call 711 or 1-800-421-1220

This letter is also available on our website at www.centersplan.com/covid19. Please check this site regularly for additional information and updates.