

Frequently Asked Questions

COVID-19

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a disease that was first identified in humans in 2019. It is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Because it is a new virus, we are studying it carefully and continue to learn about it. Most people who have COVID-19 have mild symptoms. But COVID-19 can also cause severe illness and even death. Some groups have a higher risk of severe COVID-19 disease, especially unvaccinated older adults and people who have [certain medical conditions](#). People can also be infected and never have symptoms. Some people experience post-COVID conditions. This includes a wide range of new or returning symptoms or ongoing health problems that can last for weeks or months. Even people who did not have symptoms can experience post-COVID conditions. See [CDC Long-Term effects](#).

What are coronavirus variants?

Like all viruses, SARS-CoV-2 changes constantly through mutation. These mutations add up and create slightly different versions of the virus, called “variants”. Sometimes, a mutation will result in the virus spreading more easily, making people sicker or making it resistant to treatment or vaccines. Currently, the CDC has found that all 3 vaccines authorized for use in the U.S. are highly effective at preventing serious illness and death from these variants. See LAC DPH [COVID-19 Variants FAQs](#).

How is COVID-19 spread?

The SARS-CoV-2 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 in their nose, mouth, or eyes. 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. 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. See CDC [How COVID-19 spreads](#).

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Symptoms of COVID-19 may include one or more of the following: fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath or trouble breathing, feeling tired, muscle or body aches, headache, sore throat, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, stuffy or runny nose, or new loss of taste or smell. Talk to your doctor about any of these or other symptoms that worry you. If you need help finding a doctor, call the 24/7 helpline at 2-1-1 or visit the [211LA.org](#). To learn about symptoms & what to do if you are sick, visit [ph.lacounty.gov/covidcare](#).

When should I get tested for COVID-19?

You should get a swab or saliva test for COVID-19 if:

- You have symptoms of COVID-19 (whether you are fully vaccinated or not) or
- You are a [close contact](#) to someone with COVID-19 (and are not fully vaccinated)

Testing is also recommended in other situations such as some screening programs for work, group housing, school, sports, or travel. Visit [ph.lacounty.gov/covidtests](#) to learn more about testing. To make an appointment for free testing, visit [covid19.lacounty.gov/testing](#) or call 2-1-1.



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What if I test positive for COVID-19?

If you test positive for COVID-19, you must isolate. Stay home and away from others for at least 10 days from when your symptoms started AND at least 1 day after your fever has gone without the use of medicine AND your symptoms have gotten better. If you don't have symptoms, you must isolate for 10 days from the date your positive test was taken. Tell all your close contacts that they have been exposed. For more details, visit ph.lacounty.gov/covidisolation.

When do I need to quarantine?

If you are a [close contact](#) to someone with COVID-19 you must* quarantine for 10 days.

* You do not need to quarantine if you have no symptoms of COVID-19 AND you are either fully vaccinated or you tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 3 months (90 days) and recovered (i.e., you have completed your isolation period). For more details, visit ph.lacounty.gov/covidquarantine.

When am I fully vaccinated?

You are considered fully vaccinated against COVID-19 2 weeks after:

- You got a single dose of Johnson & Johnson (J&J)/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine, or
- You got a second dose of a Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine.

See [When You've Been Fully Vaccinated](#) for more information.

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

Stopping this pandemic is going to take all our tools.

- **Get vaccinated.** It is the best way to protect against COVID-19. Vaccination will slow the spread of variants and decrease the chances that new, even more dangerous variants emerge.
- **Wear a mask that fits and filters well.** See ph.lacounty.gov/masks for more information.
- **Avoid places where COVID-19 spreads more easily.** Including crowded places, closed spaces with poor air flow, and settings where people are talking close together.
- **Improve air flow.** Open windows and doors and avoid indoor spaces with poor air flow.
- **Choose outdoor spaces** for social and fitness activities.
- **Wash your hands and/or use hand sanitizer often.** Especially after being in public spaces where surfaces are touched by many people.
- **Stay home when you are sick.**

See [Reducing Risk-Keeping Safe and Preventing Spread](#) for more tips.

How can I get vaccinated against COVID-19?

COVID-19 vaccinations are widely available across LA without an appointment. Visit www.VaccinateLACounty.com and click on "[How To Get Vaccinated](#)" to find a location near you. If you need help making an appointment, need transportation to a vaccination site, or are homebound, you can call **1-833-540-0473** from 8am to 8:30pm 7 days a week. Information is also available in multiple languages 24/7 by calling 2-1-1. Vaccinations are always free and available to everyone age 12 and over, regardless of immigration status.

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Can I travel?

Do not travel if you are sick or are in either isolation or quarantine. If you are fully vaccinated, you can travel. If you are not fully vaccinated it is best to defer travel until you are fully vaccinated. If you do choose to travel, you should follow the CDC [domestic](#) and [international](#) travel guidance for unvaccinated people which includes pre and post travel testing and quarantine upon return from travel. See the LAC DPH [Travel Advisory and Guidance](#) for more details.

I'm still feeling stressed about COVID-19 – what can I do?

As the world continues to combat COVID-19, you may feel more concerned, worried, and fearful for your health and the health of your loved ones. Physical distancing, financial troubles, lifestyle changes and other factors may also cause added stress. Be sure to watch for signs of distress, engage in regular self-care, and seek out help when needed.

If you or someone you know is having a hard time coping, help is available 24/7 by calling the LA County Department of Mental Health's Helpline 1-800-854-7771. You can also text "LA" to 741741 or talk to your doctor. The webpage <http://dmh.lacounty.gov/resources> includes tips to help manage stress and improve your emotional health as well as free access Headspace Plus - for mindfulness and meditation resources.

Where can I get reliable information about COVID-19?

There is a lot of incorrect information and a lot of scams about COVID-19. Check trusted sources for accurate information about COVID-19, including the following:

- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health:
 - COVID-19 information: ph.lacounty.gov/Coronavirus
 - COVID-19 vaccination:
 - VaccinateLACounty.com
 - DPH Vaccine Call Center **1-833-540-0473** 8am to 8:30pm daily or **2-1-1** (open 24/7).
- [California Department of Public Health](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)