Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): General Guidance and Testing Information for Nebraskans

Updated May 27, 2020

<u>Note to the Public</u>: **Public health officials, health care providers, and laboratories are working daily to increase our ability to test more people for COVID-19. Please visit www.testnebraska.com to take an assessment, which can determine your current risk or contact your local health department or health care provider to discuss testing options. Those who currently are experiencing symptoms, have interacted with someone who has already tested positive, or have recently visited places where COVID-19 is more widespread will be prioritized. The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) regularly updates our website to include the most up-to-date information at www.dhhs.ne.gov/coronavirus.**

Could I have COVID-19?

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory disease caused by a new virus strain that can spread from person to person, causing severe illness including pneumonia in some people.
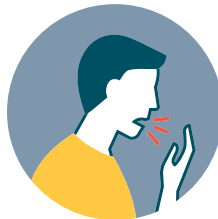
Symptoms can appear 2 to 14 days after exposure to the virus. The most common symptoms reported are:

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

You generally need to be in close contact with a sick person to get infected. Close contact includes:

- Living in the same household as a sick person with COVID-19,
- Caring for a sick person with COVID-19,
- Being within 6 feet of a sick person with COVID-19 for about 10 minutes, OR
- Being in direct contact with secretions from a sick person with COVID-19 (e.g., being coughed on, kissing, sharing utensils, etc.)

Community transmission of COVID-19 is widespread in Nebraska. This means it's difficult to tell who is sick with COVID-19 and who is sick with a normal cold or flu.

What should I do if I was in close contact with someone with COVID-19 while they were ill, but I feel well?

You should <u>self-quarantine</u>. That means you should monitor your health for fever, cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms during the 14 days after the last day you were in close contact with the sick person with COVID-19. You should not go to work or school and should avoid public places for 14 days.

What should I do if I have symptoms?

If you get sick with fever, cough, fatigue, or shortness of breath (even if your symptoms are very mild), it's possible you have COVID-19. You should isolate yourself at home and away from other people.

If you have any of the following conditions that may increase your risk for a serious infection—age 65 years or older, are immunocompromised, are pregnant, or have underlying medical conditions such as liver disease, asthma, HIV and diabetes—contact your physician's office and tell them that you were exposed to someone with COVID-19. They may want to monitor your health more closely.

If you do not have a high-risk condition and your symptoms are mild, you may not need to be evaluated in person. If you do not have a high-risk condition but want medical advice, call your healthcare provider and tell them you were exposed to someone with COVID-19. Your healthcare provider can help you decide if you need to be evaluated in person or tested. If you have a medical emergency and need to call 911, notify the dispatch personnel that you may have been exposed to COVID-19. If possible, put on a facemask before emergency medical services arrive or immediately after they arrive.

When to Seek Emergency Medical Attention

Look for **emergency warning signs** for COVID-19. If someone is showing any of these signs, **seek emergency medical care immediately.**

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion

- Inability to wake or stay awake
- Bluish lips or face

If I'm sick, what should I do to keep COVID-19 infection from spreading to my family and other people in the community?

Stay home except to get medical care and separate yourself from others

You should restrict activities outside your home, except for getting medical care. Do not go to work, school, or public areas. Avoid using public transportation, ride-sharing, or taxis. Separate yourself from other people and animals in your home. As much as possible, you should stay in a specific room and away from other people in your home. Also, you should use a separate bathroom, if available.

Call ahead before visiting your doctor

If you have a medical appointment, call the healthcare provider and tell them that you have symptoms that are consistent with COVID-19. This will help the healthcare provider's office take steps to keep other people from getting infected or exposed.

Wear a facemask

You should wear a facemask, if possible, when you are around other people (e.g., sharing a room or vehicle) and before you enter a healthcare provider's office. If you are not able to wear a facemask (for example, because it causes trouble breathing), then people who live with you should not be in the same room with you, or they should wear a facemask if they enter your room.

Note: During the COVID-19 pandemic, medical grade facemasks (also called N95 masks) are reserved for healthcare workers and first responders. You may need to make a cloth face covering using a scarf or bandana. The CDC recommends that all individuals wear a cloth face covering in public, regardless of testing status.

Cover your coughs and sneezes

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw used tissues in a lined trash can; immediately clean your hands as described below.

Clean your hands often

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 to 95% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry. Soap and water is preferred if hands are visibly dirty. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

Avoid sharing personal household items

You should not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people in your home. After using these items, they should be washed thoroughly with soap and water and dried before use by others.

Clean all "high-touch" surfaces every day

High touch surfaces include counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables. Also, clean any surfaces that may have blood, stool, or body fluids on them. Use a household cleaning spray or wipe, according to the 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.

Monitor your symptoms

Seek prompt medical attention if your illness is worsening (e.g., difficulty breathing). Before seeking care, call your healthcare provider and tell them that your symptoms are consistent with COVID-19. Put on a facemask, if possible, before you enter the facility. These steps will help the healthcare provider's office to keep other people in the office or waiting room from getting your infection.

If you have a medical emergency and need to call 911, notify the dispatch personnel that you have symptoms consistent with COVID-19. If possible, put on a facemask before emergency medical services arrive.

Discontinuing home isolation

Persons with COVID-19 who have symptoms and who are directed to care for themselves at home may discontinue home isolation under the following conditions:

- At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); AND,
- At least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

What should I do if I test negative for COVID-19?

Follow the guidance listed in "If I'm sick, what should I do to keep COVID-19 infection from spreading to my family and other people in the community?" Even though you had a negative result for COVID-19, you still likely have another type of infection causing your symptoms (such as the flu). This guidance is to protect others from getting sick from respiratory and other illness.

Please keep in mind that all tests simply measure a point in time. Testing negative for the virus does not indicate that you could not get the virus in the future. Therefore, it is important to continue safety measures, such as social distancing, limiting large crowds, and wearing personal protective equipment.

What should I do if I test positive for COVID-19?

- Stay home and isolate yourself from others. Follow the guidance listed in "If I'm sick, what should I do to keep COVID-19 infection from spreading to my family and other people in the community?"
- Your local health department will be in contact with you to identify whom you have been in contact with recently. Cooperating and working with them is extremely important and will help protect your loved ones and others, your community from further spread.
- Your local health department will provide you will information on how to protect yourself and others, as well as when it is OK to stop self-isolating.
- Wear a cloth face covering over your nose and mouth if you must be around other people or animals, including pets (even at home)
- You don't need to wear the cloth face covering if you are alone. If you can't put on a cloth face covering (because of trouble breathing, for example), cover your coughs and sneezes in some other way, such as your elbow. Try to stay at least 6 feet away from other people. This will help protect the people around you.
- Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2 years, anyone who has trouble breathing, or anyone who is not able to remove the covering without help.

Note: During the COVID-19 pandemic, medical grade facemasks (also called N95 masks) are reserved for healthcare workers and first responders. You may need to make a cloth face covering using a scarf or bandana. The CDC recommends that all individuals wear a cloth face covering in public, regardless of testing status.

Understanding terms

Self-monitor: Monitor yourself for either the development of symptoms or track the progression of your symptoms. You will be asked to check for symptoms twice daily (e.g. 8 am and 8 pm). Keeping track of your symptoms (by documenting them) will be extremely important to ensuring quick access to medical care if you do have COVID-19 and will help in determining when quarantine or isolation may end.

Self-quarantine: Before you have symptoms, but have been exposed to a person with or suspected to have COVID-19, you will be asked to separate and minimize your contact with others.

Self-isolate: After you have symptoms and have tested positive for COVID-19, you will be asked to separate and minimize your contact with others.

Where can I find the latest information on COVID-19?

For the latest COVID-19 information, visit:

- Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (NE DHHS):
  http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):
  https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html

Who can I call if I have questions?

- General questions can be direct to the COVID-19 Helpline: **402-552-6645 (toll-free: 833-998-2275) available from 8 am to 8 pm CDT seven days a week.**
- Epidemiology questions can be direct to the NE DHHS Office of Epidemiology: **402-471-2937**
- Laboratory questions can be direct to the Nebraska Public Health Laboratory (NPHL): **402-559-2440**
- Individuals who are having symptoms of COVID-19 infection (e.g., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) should call their medical provider.

I want to help my community and keep my loved ones safe. What can I do?

- CDC has developed several guidance documents that discuss use of social distancing based on the amount of community spread: none, minimal to moderate, and substantial.
  - Community mitigation guidance:
    https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community-mitigation-strategy.pdf
  - Schools and childcare guidance:
    https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html
    - School closure guidance:
      https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/considerations-for-school-closure.pdf
  - Colleges and university guidance:
    https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/colleges-universities/index.html
  - Large event guidance:
    https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/index.html
  - Businesses and employer guidance:
    https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html
  - Community and faith-based organization guidance:
    https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/index.html
  - Shelter guidance:
    https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/index.html
  - Individual and household:
    https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/protect-home.html

How should I perform cleaning of high-touch areas?

- If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
- For disinfection, diluted household bleach solutions, alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol, and most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective.

- At Home:
  https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/cleaning-disinfection.html
- At schools, businesses, colleges/universities, churches, and events:
  https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html
- For healthcare settings (environmental infection control):
  https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/control-recommendations.html
- For emergency medical services (EMS) providers:
  https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-for-ems.html
- For law enforcement:
  https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-law-enforcement.html