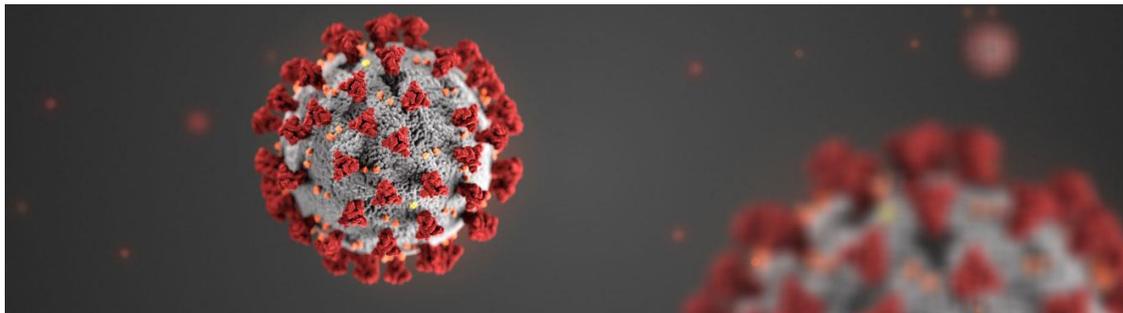




THE UNIVERSITY *of* NORTH TEXAS
HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER *at* FORT WORTH

CENTER FOR GERIATRICS

COVID-19: What You Need to Know to Stay Informed



During this time of challenge and uncertainty, information about the coronavirus (COVID-19) is developing rapidly. UNTHSC Center for Geriatrics is sharing the best information we have to protect the public's health, especially among older adults and family caregivers. It is important to stay informed using reliable information and follow CDC recommendations to protect yourself and those around you. We are thinking of you during this difficult time and welcome you to [reach out to us](#) if you need assistance.

Sincerely,

Janice Knebl, DO, MBA

DSWOP Endowed Chair and Professor in Geriatrics

UNT System Regents Professor

Interim Director for the Department of Internal Medicine and Geriatrics

Director, Center for Geriatrics

Get The Facts On COVID-19



The [Centers For Disease Control And Prevention](#), or CDC, is an excellent source of information. The CDC maintains an updated resource page on the Basic Facts About Coronavirus or COVID-19, How to Prepare, and What You Need to Know regarding symptoms, resources, travel, and the current cases being reported in the U.S.

In response to COVID-19, the 2-1-1 number has been activated in Texas statewide. Dial [2-1-1](#) on any home or cell phone to reach specialists available 24/7. They are there to answer non-medical FAQs, based on material provided by [DSHS](#) and [CDC](#). Questions that 211 specialists can't answer will be referred to DSHS and local Public Health Department COVID-19 information lines.

STICK TO THE FACTS

Be wary of misinformation and stick to the facts. By staying informed and using reliable sources, we can help [reduce fear, anxiety, and social stigmas](#) during this unprecedented time.

- Coronavirus doesn't recognize race, nationality or ethnicity.
- Wearing a mask does not mean a person is ill.
- There is not enough evidence to show that companion animals, including pets, can spread COVID-19.
- Show compassion and support for those most closely impacted.

Tips to Protect Yourself & Those Around You

PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF CONTAGIOUS DISEASES

Everyday behaviors can minimize the spread of contagious diseases, including COVID-19.

The CDC provides instructions for everyday basic prevention:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- 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.
- Avoid touching high-touch surfaces in public places.
- Avoid touching your face, nose, eyes, and mouth.
- Clean and disinfect your home to remove germs.
- Avoid crowds.
- Avoid all non-essential travel.
- Stay home when you are sick.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

Whenever possible social distancing is recommended by the CDC to slow the spread of contagious diseases such as COVID-19. Social distancing means avoiding direct contact with other people, germs in the air, and contaminated surfaces.

Recommendations for social distancing include:

- Staying about six feet away from other people
- Limiting day-to-day activities
- Avoiding large groups, assemblies, and unnecessary travel

Social distancing is not the same as self-quarantine or isolation, two other practices being utilized to minimize the coronavirus spread. The key difference is that a quarantine or isolation restricts the movement of people within a certain area or zone to limit transferring and spreading an infection. Social distancing is a behavioral practice and does not place limits on location.

IF YOU ARE SICK

Anyone with a weakened or compromised immune system is at risk. It's important to avoid illness and maintain good health by eating nutritious foods, exercising, and reducing stress.

In times of illness, it's important to watch for possible signs of COVID-19. Potential COVID-19 symptoms include, fever, cough, and shortness of breath. If you feel like you are developing symptoms, call your healthcare provider.

The CDC recommends the following steps if you are sick with COVID-19 or think you might have it:

- Stay home – unless you need medical attention
- Separate yourself from other people and pets and animals in the home
- Call ahead before visiting your doctor
- Wear a facemask
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Clean your hands often
- Avoid sharing personal household items
- Clean high-touch surfaces everyday
- Monitor your symptoms

Visit the [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov) for more details on each of these steps. In all cases, follow the guidance of your health care provider and local public health officials.

REDUCE FEAR AND STRESS

The CDC recognizes that infectious disease outbreaks, including COVID-19, can elicit fear, worry, anxiety, and stress, especially in older people and people with chronic disease. The CDC recommends the following tactics to manage stress and support your mental health:

- **Take breaks** from reading, watching, or listening to news stories. Additionally, some people find that social media can trigger upsetting thoughts.
 - **Take care of your body.** Practice deep breathing, eat healthy foods, get plenty of sleep, limit alcohol consumption, and exercise regularly.
 - **Continue to do activities** that you enjoy but be mindful of social distancing.
 - **Connect with family or friends** and share your feelings about the situation.
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Special Considerations

PERSONS WITH CHRONIC CONDITIONS

People with severe chronic medical conditions like diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, or COPD are at higher risk for more serious COVID-19.

The [CDC](#) is recommending that people with higher risk take the following actions:

- Stock up on supplies such as medicines, groceries, and household items.
- Maintain space between yourself and others. See [Social Distancing](#).
- When you go out in public, keep away from others who are sick, limit close contact, and wash your hands often.
- 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.

CAREGIVERS OF PERSONS WITH DEMENTIA

There are many families and friends providing critical caregiving support for persons living with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. Dementia increases the risk of contracting COVID-19. Persons with dementia may forget recommendations for prevention behaviors and social distancing, and is often accompanied by other chronic conditions. Also, having illness can exacerbate cognitive impairment.

The [Alzheimer's Association](#) provides tips for dementia caregiving in the home including:

- Communicating with healthcare providers about changes in cognitive behaviors
- Providing extra reminders about preventative behaviors like washing hands
- Making a plan and preparing for illness.

If the person with dementia lives in an assisted living community, note that many are limiting visitors. Check with community management about their plans for managing risk within their community. You can also try checking in with your loved one often with phone calls and video chats - talk with staff to learn your options.

If you know caregivers of persons with dementia, help reduce any feelings of isolation or stress by reaching out to offer additional support. By staying healthy, family and friends can continue their important role of providing care and quality of life for their loved one.

How to Help Older Adults in Your Community

Social distancing and limited group activities place older adults at risk of social isolation. Show compassion and support for older adults who are closely impacted. Visiting daily by phone or video can make a big difference in [helping older adults stay connected](#).

Many organizations provide services and support for older adults in the local community. During these unprecedented times, organizations are serving a greater need with limited resources. Senior centers that provide meals for older adults are closed to prevent exposure to and spread of the virus. It is essential that older adults continue to receive nutritious food.

DONATE OR VOLUNTEER

To contribute funding to alleviate need, especially with regard to keeping our older adults nutritionally healthy during this period, contact your local Area Agency on Aging, Meals on Wheels or Food Bank organizations.

If you live in Tarrant County, United Way of Tarrant County is coordinating volunteers and donations for local nutrition programs. Visit [United Way of Tarrant County's facebook](#) page to connect. You can also check out our community partners below for additional opportunities in your area.



STOP THE SPREAD OF GERMS

Help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases like COVID-19.

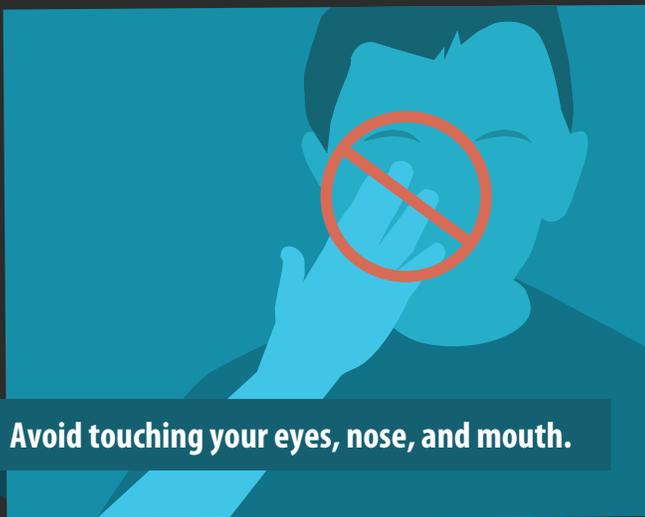
Avoid close contact with people who are sick.



Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.



Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.



Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.



Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.



Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.



[cdc.gov/COVID19](https://www.cdc.gov/COVID19)

SOCIAL DISTANCING

Tips from The Gerontological Society of America's National Adult Vaccination Program



WHAT IS SOCIAL DISTANCING?

- Social distancing is a public health term that describes actions to stop or slow the spread of contagious diseases like COVID-19.
- Avoiding places where you may come into direct contact with other people, germs in the air, or contaminated surfaces is an important part of social distancing.
- Social distancing helps keep the number of cases of infected people manageable for health care providers and hospitals to provide care.

WHERE DOES SOCIAL DISTANCING APPLY?

- Day-to-day activities such as going to work, school, the supermarket, religious gatherings, or health care appointments.
- Wherever people gather, including large assemblies—such as concerts, sporting events, or rallies—as well as for travel by plane, train, or other public transportation.

ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTIONS

- Instead of hugs or handshakes, consider smiling or bumping elbows.
- Stay apart from others: 3 feet is okay, 6 feet is better. Avoid touching your face, especially keep fingers out of your mouth, nose, and eyes.
- Sneeze and cough into tissues (or your elbow), immediately throw the tissues in a trash container, and then wash your hands.



LARGE GATHERINGS

- Stay away from large gatherings, such as concerts or sporting events, to avoid viral contact—especially if you are older or have health conditions or if you visit with someone older or with chronic conditions.
- Check local guidance. Some places may be canceling events over a certain size attendance.

DAY-TO-DAY ACTIVITIES

- Consider online ordering and delivery services instead of going to public places like grocery stores and pharmacies.
- At religious services, refrain from physical contact such as holding hands, hugging, sharing a common cup, or using fountains with standing water.
- Wash your hands after touching keypads at checkout counters/ATMS, door knobs, tables/countertops, arm rests, shared pens or pencils, phones, coffee pots, or refrigerator/microwave handles.
- At restaurants, sit at a table instead of a crowded bar. If you can't wash your hands before eating, use hand sanitizer with 60% to 95% alcohol.





WORK ENVIRONMENT

- If possible, work remotely and use virtual meetings or phone calls. For in-person meetings, greet with smiles instead of handshakes and stay several feet apart from others.
- Wash hands after touching door handles, equipment, desks, and keyboards. Use paper towels to open doors after handwashing. Keep equipment and phone clean using disinfectant products that kill viruses.
- Limit food sharing. If food is provided at work, be sure food prep staff have been screened and follow strict hygiene.
- Talk to your employer about financial stress caused by lost wages and reduced hours.

HOME ENVIRONMENT

- Clean frequently touched areas like door knobs, light switches, countertops, and remote controls with store-bought disinfectants or bleach to kill COVID-19 and other germs that may enter your home.



GETTING SICK



- If you need to go to the doctor or emergency department, call first for instructions and guidance. A virtual visit may be possible.
- If you have respiratory illness symptoms, avoid contact with others and call your doctor. If you must go out, wear a mask.
- If you have been exposed to COVID-19, you could be asked to self-quarantine in your home. Make plans for childcare, caregiving, and deliveries of food or medicine.
- If the stress of COVID-19 and social isolation is getting to you, seek care for possible anxiety and/or depression. Watch for symptoms of uncertainty, frustration, loneliness, anger, boredom, or a desire to use alcohol or drugs.

TRAVEL

- Federal authorities suggest limiting long plane or train rides, particularly for those over age 60 or people with chronic conditions.
- Be aware of restrictions or bans on international and domestic travel.
- If taking public transportation, try to keep a distance of at least 3 feet between you and other passengers. Wash hands before and after your trip using soap and water, or use hand sanitizer with 60% to 95% alcohol.



For more information, visit the CDC website [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) or the GSA compilation of COVID-19 resources [NAV.P.org](https://www.navp.org).

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NATIONAL ADULT VACCINATION PROGRAM
CHARTING NEW FRONTIERS ACROSS THE AGING CONTINUUM



What to do if you are sick with coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)

If you are sick with COVID-19 or suspect you are infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, follow the steps below to help prevent the disease from spreading to people in your home and community.

Stay home except to get medical care

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

People: 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.

Animals: Do not handle pets or other animals while sick. See [COVID-19 and Animals](#) for more information.

Call ahead before visiting your doctor

If you have a medical appointment, call the healthcare provider and tell them that you have or may have 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 when you are around other people (e.g., sharing a room or vehicle) or pets 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 stay in the same room with you, or they should wear a facemask if they enter your room.

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 wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-95% alcohol covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry. Soap and water should be used preferentially if hands are visibly dirty.

Avoid sharing personal household items

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

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% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry. Soap and water should be used preferentially if hands are visibly dirty. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

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 you have, or are being evaluated for, COVID-19. Put on a facemask 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 infected or exposed.

Ask your healthcare provider to call the local or state health department. Persons who are placed under active monitoring or facilitated self-monitoring should follow instructions provided by their local health department or occupational health professionals, as appropriate.

If you have a medical emergency and need to call 911, notify the dispatch personnel that you have, or are being evaluated for COVID-19. If possible, put on a facemask before emergency medical services arrive.

Discontinuing home isolation

Patients with confirmed COVID-19 should remain under home isolation precautions until the risk of secondary transmission to others is thought to be low. The decision to discontinue home isolation precautions should be made on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with healthcare providers and state and local health departments.



For more information: www.cdc.gov/COVID19