

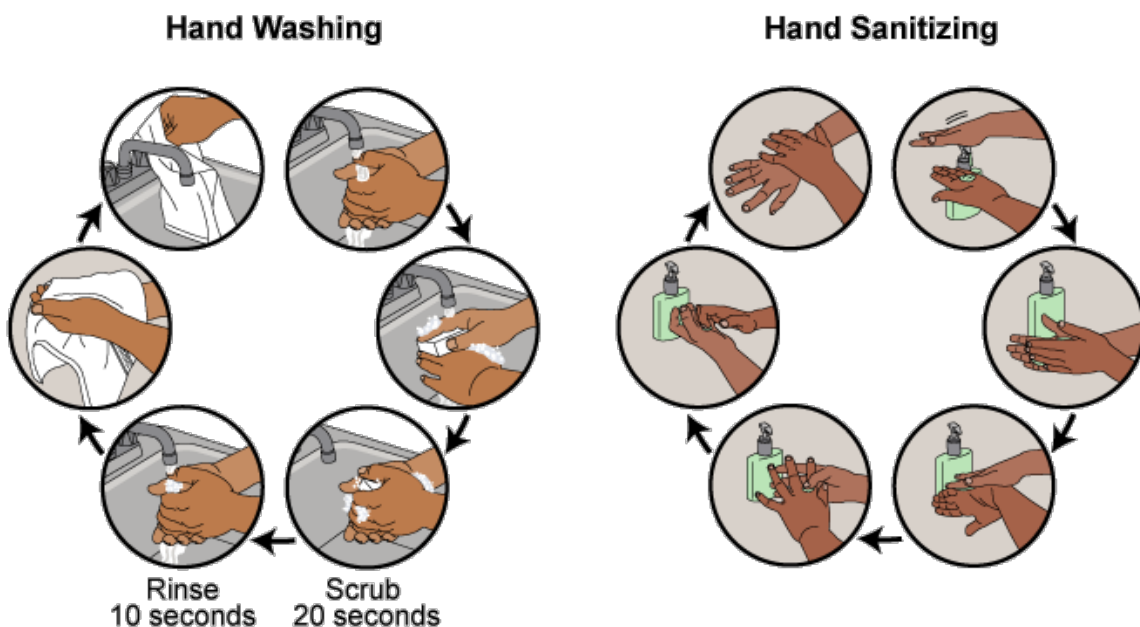
Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Discharge Instructions

About this topic

Coronavirus disease 2019 is also known as COVID-19. It is a viral illness that infects the lungs. It is caused by a virus called SARS-associated coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). This illness was first seen in late 2019 in China and has spread across the world.

The signs of COVID-19 are like the flu, and you may have a cough, fever, and it may be hard to breathe. It spreads easily through droplets with the virus when you sneeze or cough. The germs also survive on surfaces like tables, door handles, and telephones. That means you can become sick if you touch a surface with the virus and then touch your face.

Some people have a mild case of COVID-19 and are able to stay at home until they feel better. Others may need to be in the hospital if they are very sick. People with COVID-19 most often have to isolate themselves for about 2 weeks.



What care is needed at home?

- Ask your doctor what you need to do when you go home. Make sure you ask questions if you do not understand what the doctor says.
- Drink lots of water, juice, or broth to replace fluids lost from a fever.
- You may use cool mist humidifiers to help ease congestion and coughing.

- Use 2 to 3 pillows to prop yourself up when you lie down to make it easier to breathe and sleep.
- Do not smoke and do not drink beer, wine, and mixed drinks (alcohol).
- To lower the chance of passing the infection to others:
 - Wash your hands often.
 - Do not make food for others.
 - Stay home in a separate room, except to get medical care.
 - Wear a mask if you are around others who are not sick.
 - Use a separate bathroom if possible.

What follow-up care is needed?

- Your doctor may ask you to make visits to the office to check on your progress. Be sure to keep these visits.
- Make sure you wear a mask at these visits. If you can, tell the staff you have COVID-19 ahead of time so they can take extra care to stop the disease from spreading.
- It may take a few weeks before your health returns to normal.

What drugs may be needed?

The doctor may order drugs to:

- Help with breathing
- Help with fever
- Help with swelling in your airways and lungs
- Control coughing
- Ease a sore throat
- Help a runny or stuffy nose

Will physical activity be limited?

You may have to limit your physical activity. Talk to your doctor about the right amount of activity for you.

What problems could happen?

- Fluid loss. This is dehydration.
- Short-term or long-term lung damage
- Heart problems
- Death

What can be done to prevent this health problem?

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60 percent alcohol also work to kill the virus. Rub your hands with the sanitizer for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid crowds. Try to stay home as much as you can. If you do need to be in a group of other people, wash your hands often. Try to stay at least 6 feet (1.8 meters) apart. Avoid handshakes, hugs, and high fives.
- If you must travel, check for alerts on what countries and places are affected by COVID-19 and stay away from those areas.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. You can also cough into your elbow. Throw away tissues in the trash and wash your hands after touching used tissues.
- Avoid touching your own face with your hands, especially around your nose and mouth.
- Wipe down often touched objects and surfaces with a household cleaning wipe or spray. Check the label to make sure it works to kill viruses.
- Wear a gown, face mask, and gloves if you will come in contact with blood, mucus, or other body fluids from someone who has COVID-19.

- Masks are **NOT NEEDED** if you:
 - Do not have symptoms of COVID-19
 - Have not been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 or is at high risk of it
- Masks **ARE NEEDED** if you:
 - Are sick with COVID-19 and in the same room with other people
 - Are taking care of someone with COVID-19
 - Have symptoms of COVID-19 and have been in a high-risk place
 - Are in close contact with someone who is at high risk for COVID-19

When do I need to call the doctor?

- Signs of infection. These include a fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, chills, cough, more sputum, or change in color of sputum.
- Breathing is getting worse - harder or faster than before or you feel like you are getting less air
- Trouble breathing while lying down flat on your back
- You need to lean forward to help you breathe when sitting
- Fingertips, fingernails, skin, or lips are blue

Teach Back: Helping You Understand

The Teach Back Method helps you understand the information we are giving you. After you talk with the staff, tell them in your own words what you learned. This helps to make sure the staff has described each thing clearly. It also helps to explain things that may have been confusing. Before going home, make sure you can do these:

- I can tell you about my condition.
- I can tell you what may help ease my breathing.
- I can tell you what I can do to help avoid passing the infection to others.
- I can tell you what I will do if I have trouble breathing; feel sleepy or confused; or my fingertips, fingernails, skin, or lips are blue.

Where can I learn more?

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/index.html>

World Health Organization

<https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>

Last Reviewed Date

2020-03-16

Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer

This information is not specific medical advice and does not replace information you receive from your health care provider. This is only a brief summary of general information. It does NOT include all information about conditions, illnesses, injuries, tests, procedures, treatments, therapies, discharge instructions or life-style choices that may apply to you. You must talk with your health care provider for complete information about your health and treatment options. This information should not be used to decide whether or not to accept your health care provider's advice, instructions or recommendations. Only your health care provider has the knowledge and training to provide advice that is right for you.