

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

INFORMATION FOR COMMUNITIES

The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness in people caused by a new virus. It can spread from person to person. This virus was first identified in Wuhan, China, and has now spread to more countries including the United States. Since this is a new virus, there are still things we do not know, but we are learning more about COVID-19 each day.

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

- It spreads between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
 - These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.
 - It is also possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes.
- People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest).

Minnesota's public health community is taking this seriously and planning for cases.

Symptoms

- People with confirmed COVID-19 infection have had mild to severe respiratory illness. Symptoms of the illness are fever, cough, and shortness of breath.
- If you have symptoms and can manage those symptoms at home, you don't have to seek health care or be tested for COVID-19. Just stay home while you are sick.
- If you are older or have underlying medical conditions, it may be helpful to let your health care provider know you are sick. They may have some specific advice for you.
- Some people with COVID-19 have worsened during the second week of illness. If your symptoms worsen at any point, and you do need to go see a doctor, call ahead before going in.

Protect yourself and your community

The best ways to protect yourself from COVID-19 are to do the same things you do to protect yourself from colds and flu:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

People who are 70 and older, or people of any age who have underlying health conditions that put them at a higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19, should stay at home and avoid gatherings or other situations of potential exposures, including travel.

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) recommends other community-level strategies to help slow the spread of novel coronavirus in Minnesota communities. These strategies are efforts to limit the

spread of the infection and reduce its impacts on our communities and our health care system. They are designed to make person-to-person transmission less likely by reducing the close-contact interactions (interactions with others within 6 feet for 10 minutes or more) that tend to result in passing along the illness.

- Event organizers cancelling or postponing gatherings with 50 or more people, including concerts, conferences, festivals, weddings, professional and amateur performances or sporting events.
- Event organizers cancelling or postponing smaller events (those with less than 50 people) that are held in settings that do not allow social distancing of 6 feet per person.
- Events with more than 10 people where the majority of participants are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.
- Events of any size should only be continued if they can be carried out with adherence to guidelines for protecting vulnerable populations, hand hygiene, and social distancing. When feasible, organizers could modify events to be virtual.
- People and families at higher risk of severe COVID-19 illness staying at home and avoiding gatherings or other situations of potential exposures, including travel.
- Employers making telework arrangements for workers whose duties can be done remotely.
- Employers staggering work schedules and limiting non-essential work travel.
- Health care facilities and assisted-living facilities more strictly limiting visitors.
- Faith-based organizations offering video or audio events.
- Hospitals and other health care facilities implementing triage before entering facilities (for example, parking lot triage, phone triage, and telemedicine to limit unnecessary visits).

Shopping for groceries and other items is not affected by these recommendations, although it is a good idea to limit close contact when doing so – and people who are sick should not be shopping or using transit. They should stay home until they recover.

The recommendations to avoid mass gatherings do not pertain to normal operations of airports, bus and train stations, medical facilities, libraries, shopping malls and centers, or other spaces where 100 or more people may be in transit. Even so, people in high-risk categories (the elderly and those with underlying medical conditions) should consider limiting such activities.

By order of the governor, beginning March 17 at 5 p.m., and continuing until March 27 at 5 p.m., the following places are closed to members of the public:

- Restaurants, food courts, cafes, coffeehouses, and other places of public accommodation offering food or beverage for on-premises consumption, excluding institutional or in-house food cafeterias that serve residents, employees, and clients of businesses, child care facilities, hospitals, and longterm care facilities.
- Bars, taverns, brew pubs, breweries, microbreweries, distilleries, wineries, tasting rooms, clubs, and other places of public accommodation offering alcoholic beverages for on-premises consumption.
- Hookah bars, cigar bars, and vaping lounges offering their products for on-premises consumption.
- Theaters, cinemas, indoor and outdoor performance venues, and museums.
- Gymnasiums, fitness centers, recreation centers, indoor sports facilities, indoor exercise facilities, exercise studios, and spas.

- Amusement parks, arcades, bingo halls, bowling alleys, indoor climbing facilities, skating rinks, trampoline parks, and other similar recreational or entertainment facilities.
- Country clubs, golf clubs, boating or yacht clubs, sports or athletic clubs, and dining clubs.

Minnesotans Working Together

According to Minnesota Commissioner of Health Jan Malcolm, these recommendations show that every Minnesota resident and organization has an important role to play in protecting our state from the risks of this disease.

Learn more

Get the most current information on COVID-19 from these websites:

Minnesota Department of Health 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)
(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/index.html).

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
2019 Novel Coronavirus
(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html).

COVID-19 Hotlines:

Community mitigation (schools, child care, business) questions:

651-297-1304 or 1-800-657-3504
7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Health questions:

651-201-3920 or 1-800-657-3903
7 a.m. to 7 p.m.