COVID-19

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Most people who have COVID-19 have mild symptoms and some people can be infected and never have symptoms. But COVID-19 can also cause severe illness and death. Some people are at higher risk of severe COVID-19 disease. After infection, some people experience post-COVID conditions. This includes a wide range of new or returning symptoms or ongoing healthproblems that can last for weeks or months. Even people who did not have symptoms at first can experience post-COVID conditions. For more information, see the CDC webpage CDC Post-COVID Conditions.

What are coronavirus variants?

Like all viruses, SARS-CoV-2 constantly changes 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. The COVID-19 vaccines used in the U.S. help to prevent serious illness and death from variants, including the Omicron variant. For more information, see the CDC webpage What You Need to Know About Variants.

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 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. For more information, see the CDC webpage 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. Some people with COVID-19 infection never get symptoms.

What if I have symptoms of COVID-19?

If you have symptoms of COVID-19, stay home away from others and get a COVID-19 test right away. Talk to your doctor about any symptoms that worry you. Visit ph.lacounty.gov/covidcare to learn more about what to do if you are sick. For information on how to get a COVID-19 test, visit ph.lacounty.gov/covidtests/how. If you need help finding a doctor, call the 24/7 helpline at 2-1-1 or visit 211LA.org.

When should I get tested for COVID-19?

It is important to get a COVID-19 test, even if you are up to date with your COVID-19 vaccines:
- If you have symptoms of COVID-19
- If you are a close contact to someone with COVID-19 (see the definition of close contact below)

- It is also a good idea to test before and after attending a gathering or event and before and after travel.

Visit ph.lacounty.gov/covidtests for more information on when to get tested and how to get a test.

What if I test positive for COVID-19?
This means the test detected the COVID-19 virus. It is very likely you have COVID-19 and could spread it to others. You must isolate (stay away from others) for at least 5 days. You are required to wear a highly protective mask if you must be around others while you are in isolation. Follow the isolation instructions closely at ph.lacounty.gov/covidisolation.

Tell all your close contacts that they have been exposed. They could be infected and must take steps to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19. Give them the instructions for close contacts, available in multiple languages at ph.lacounty.gov/covidcontacts. Close contacts must follow the instructions even if they feel well or are vaccinated.

Learn more about tests results at Understanding Your Viral Test Result at ph.lacounty.gov/covidtests.

Can I get medication to treat COVID-19?
If you have symptoms and you test positive for COVID-19 AND you are at higher risk for getting very sick, there are medicines you can take to help keep you out of the hospital. You may be eligible for treatment if you are age 65 and older OR regardless of your age on the advice of a medical provider. Some of the medicines are taken by mouth (oral treatment) and some are given by injection.

There are several different ways to get COVID-19 medications.
- Your doctor can write you a prescription.
- You can use a federal Test to Treat program, or you can call the Public Health Tele-Health Service (available seven days a week from 8:00 am - 8:30 pm at 833-540-0473). These test to treat services provide access to COVID-19 testing, evaluation, and if you are eligible, oral COVID-19 treatment.

If you are higher risk for getting very sick from COVID-19, contact your doctor or a test to treat service right away, **even if your symptoms are mild. Don't delay: the medicines work best when they are given as soon as possible after symptoms start.**

For more information on the medications and how to get them, visit ph.lacounty.gov/covidmedicines.

When am I considered to be a close contact to someone with COVID-19?
You are a "close contact" if you shared the same indoor airspace with someone with COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period while they were infectious*. Examples of indoor airspaces are homes, waiting rooms, and airplanes. An example of 'a total of 15 minutes or more' is being in the same airspace with the person for 5 minutes at least 3 different times in 24 hours. Note: a different definition of a close contact may be used if you are exposed at work or school.

*A person with COVID-19 is considered to be infectious (meaning they can spread COVID-19 to others) starting 2 days before their symptoms began until their isolation ends. If they tested positive for COVID-19 but did not

have any symptoms, they are considered to be infectious from 2 days before their test was taken until their isolation ends.

What should I do if I am a close contact to someone with COVID-19?

In LA County, if you are a close contact to someone with COVID-19 and you have no symptoms, you do not need to quarantine. You are required to get tested for COVID-19 and to monitor your health and wear a highly protective mask for 10 days. Follow all instructions for close contacts at ph.lacounty.gov/covidcontacts. Some close contacts are required to quarantine or be excluded from work if they live or work in a high-risk setting. People who were exposed at work or school should follow the instructions of the workplace or school.

When am I up to date on my COVID-19 vaccines?

You are up to date with your COVID-19 vaccines when you have received all recommended doses in the primary series, and you have received all recommended booster doses when they are due. The DPH COVID-19 Vaccine Schedules show when each dose is due. Learn more at the CDC website Stay Up To Date with Your COVID-19 Vaccines.

How can I get vaccinated against COVID-19?

COVID-19 vaccinations are widely available across LA County without an appointment. Visit www.Vaccinate LACounty.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 5 and over, regardless of immigration status.

Can I get medication to prevent COVID-19?

Yes, if you cannot receive a COVID-19 vaccination for medical reasons or if you are moderately or severely immunocompromised. The medication, called Evusheld, is used *before* you are exposed to COVID-19. It is given to prevent you from getting infected. It is given by injection to people ages 12 and over who weigh at least 88lb. For more information, visit ph.lacounty.gov/covidmedicines and talk to your doctor.

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

- **Get vaccinated and get your booster(s) when you are eligible.** It is the best way to protect against COVID-19. Vaccination will slow the spread of variants and lower 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.
- **Get medicine to prevent COVID-19 if you are eligible** (see above).
- **Avoid places where COVID-19 spreads more easily**, including crowded indoor 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. See the California Department of Public Health's Tips for Reducing COVID-19 Risk Indoors and CDC's Improving Ventilation in Your Home webpage for more information.

- **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.

Follow instructions at ph.lacounty.gov/covidcontacts if you are a close contact

See ph.lacounty.gov/reducerisk for more tips.

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

As the world continues to combat COVID-19, you may feel concerned, worried, and fearful for your health and the health of your loved ones, 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.

LA County residents have free access to iPrevail.com, an online mental health resource to help with life's everyday stressors. After a short assessment, you are connected to customized support which may include on-demand chat with peer coaches, self-paced lessons to improve wellbeing, and community support groups. iPrevail is available 24/7 and offered in English and Spanish.

Where can I get reliable information about COVID-19?

There is a lot of misinformation 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 for FAQs and factsheets, information on How to Get Vaccinated, and more.
- California Department of Public Health
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- World Health Organization (WHO)

Call the DPH Call Center **1-833-540-0473** 8am to 8:30pm daily or **2-1-1** (open 24/7) if you have questions or need help to get vaccines, treatment, or resources.

Look out for COVID-19 scams

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, scammers are still at work to cheat people out of money. To learn more about how to avoid a scam and what to do if you are a victim of a scam, visit the DPH COVID-19 Scams and Fraud webpage.