



Covid-19 FAQs for Working from Home

1. Is it safe to get take-out or delivery food?

Currently there is no evidence of food or food packaging being associated with transmission of COVID-19. Unlike foodborne gastrointestinal (GI) viruses like norovirus and hepatitis A that often make people ill through contaminated food. SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19, is a virus that causes respiratory illness. Foodborne exposure to this virus is not known to be a route of transmission.

Food facilities, like other work establishments, need to follow protocols set by local and state health departments, which may vary depending on the amount of community spread of COVID-19 in a particular area.

Some restaurants have closed, but others are remaining open for take-out or delivery. They should be monitoring the health of kitchen employees as they come on shift, and some require packers and drivers to wear masks, gloves and perhaps nonporous windbreakers that are sprayed with disinfectant each night. Deliveries can be contact free, where the food and tip are taken care of via credit card on-line or left outside for the delivery person, who leaves the packaged food at the door.

It is important to remember that even if packaging is contaminated, it is probably not highly contaminated. The food cartons come to the restaurants in clean packaging, and are generally stacked in the kitchen, and are generally delivered in an insulated outer covering, so even if sick personnel are around the contamination level of the bags and cartons is probably minimal in the worst of conditions.

If you are concerned about the outer packaging being contaminated, use gloves to handle the outer packaging, open, wash hands, and wipe down the inner packaging with a disinfectant, wash hands again before eating. Ordering hot food may be safer, at this time, than cold food such as sushi. Another suggestion is to only order from a restaurant that you trust, where you have never gotten sick by eating their food, where the bathrooms are clean, etc. Food sharing is discouraged, especially when it involves eating out of the same container, as this will just increase the risk of sharing germs.

It may be prudent for the elderly or immunosuppressed people to prepare their own food in this situation, especially if they are especially concerned about contracting a virus.

Also, many people feel that it is important to support, as much as possible, local businesses and staff by ordering take-out or delivery food at this difficult time.

2. Can I order from Amazon?

There is likely very low risk of spread of SARS-CoV-2 from products or packaging that are shipped over a period of days or weeks at ambient temperatures. Coronaviruses are generally thought to be spread most often by respiratory droplets. Currently there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 associated with imported goods and there have not been any cases of COVID-19 in the United States associated with imported goods.

To learn what Amazon is doing to keep workers and customers safe:

<https://blog.aboutamazon.com/company-news/amazons-actions-to-help-employees-communities-and-customers-affected-by-covid-19>

3. Does the virus live on paper/plastic bags or cardboard boxes?

A recent study shows that there is no viable virus on cardboard after 24 hours; there was viable virus found on plastic up to 72 hours. However, the number of viable virus particles declined drastically over these time on these surfaces. The infectious dose (the number of viral particles required to cause an infection) is unknown at this time. In order for any viral particles to cause an infection from a fomite (surfaces such as plastic/cardboard/paper) one would have to contaminate the hands and then touch the eyes, nose or mouth with the contaminated hands. If you are concerned about opening packaging, wear gloves and/or wash your hands after handling. <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMc2004973>

4. So, I need to take measures to make myself safer while ordering/opening packages?

If you are concerned about the potential for contaminated packaging, wear gloves and wash your hands after opening. See FAQ #1 above for more recommendations.

5. While I am at home, is it OK to go outside to exercise, walk the dog, etc.?

Taking a walk, walking the dog, biking, jogging, etc. are all excellent ways to relieve stress and get some exercise. Sunlight is an excellent sanitizer; any aerosols or droplets you produce will be diluted. If you are in isolation due to a known infection or potential infection, avoid other people as much as possible. Importantly, avoid crowds and do not congregate outside. Remember the social distancing 6-ft rule.

Please remember that exercise usually requires plenty of access to oxygen and wearing a surgical mask or N95 respirator can make it harder to breathe. Even normal activities can make this equipment "hot and uncomfortable," according to the CDC. Additionally, improperly worn masks (i.e. not accounting for the movement or perspiration that accompanies exercise) may make a mask ineffective.

https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=30350

6. Why am I now urged to wear a face covering?

We now know from recent studies that a significant portion of individuals with coronavirus lack symptoms ("asymptomatic") and that even those who eventually develop symptoms ("pre-symptomatic") can transmit the virus to others before showing symptoms. This means that the virus can spread between people interacting in close proximity—for example, speaking, coughing, or sneezing—even if those people are not exhibiting symptoms. In light of this new evidence, CDC recommends (since April 3) wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies) especially in areas of significant community-based transmission.

It is critical to emphasize that maintaining 6-foot social distancing remains important to slowing the spread of the virus. CDC is additionally advising the use of simple cloth face coverings to slow the spread of the virus and help people who may have the virus and do not know it from transmitting it to others.

Cloth face coverings fashioned from household items or made at home from common materials at low cost can be used as an additional, voluntary public health measure.

The cloth face coverings recommended are not surgical masks or N-95 respirators. Those are critical supplies that must continue to be reserved for healthcare workers and other medical first responders, as recommended by current CDC guidance.

Demonstration by US Surgeon General on how to make a cloth face covering at home:

<https://youtu.be/tPx1yqvJgf4>

7. What is better, soap and water or a hand sanitizer against SARS-CoV-2?

Handwashing is one of the best ways to protect yourself and your family from getting sick. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Alcohol should not be a replacement for soap and water, if soap and water is available.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/hcp-hand-hygiene-faq.html>

8. What should I pay attention to when cleaning at home?

Community members can practice routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces (for example: tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, toilets, faucets, sinks) with household cleaners and EPA-registered disinfectants that are appropriate for the surface, following 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.

It is important to think of commonly-touched but less-often-cleaned surfaces at this time – handles of appliances or cabinets, toothbrush holders, trays for silverware, remote controls, children’s toys, artificial house plants, etc. Think broadly about what surfaces may have become contaminated if you are thinking about deep-cleaning your home after a positive case has been there.

9. Should I clean my smartphone?

It is a good idea to always clean your smartphone, not just because we are living through a pandemic. Derek Poore from CNET recommends using 70% isopropyl alcohol to clean your phone screen. Apple and Google have said that Clorox wipes can be used to disinfect their smart devices. [AT&T recently revised cleaning guidelines](#) suggesting the use of nonabrasive or alcohol-based (70% isopropyl) disinfectant through spray directly on a soft lint-free cloth and wipe down your device while it is powered down and unplugged. And while you are disinfecting your smartphones, maybe is a good idea to wipe the remote controls in the household.

<https://www.cnet.com/how-to/help-keep-coronavirus-off-your-phone-how-to-effectively-disinfect-and-clean-your-device/>

10. How can I protect myself while caring for someone that may have COVID-19?

- You should take many of the same precautions as you would if you were caring for someone with the flu:
 - Stay in another room or be separated from the person as much as possible. Use a separate bedroom and bathroom, if available.
 - Make sure the patient shuts the toilet lid prior to flushing.
 - Make sure that shared spaces in the home have good air flow. Turn on an air conditioner or open a window.
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains 60 to 95% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry. Use soap and water if your hands are visibly dirty.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Extra precautions:
 - You and the person should wear a face mask if you are in the same room.
 - Wear a disposable face mask and gloves when you touch or have contact with the person's blood, stool, or body fluids, such as saliva, sputum, nasal mucus, vomit, urine.
 - Throw out disposable face masks and gloves after using them. Do not reuse.
 - First remove and throw away gloves. Then, immediately clean your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Next, remove and throw away the face mask, and immediately clean your hands again with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
 - Do not share household items such as dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, bedding, or other items with the person who is sick. After the person uses these items, wash them thoroughly in hot water with soap.
 - Clean all "high-touch" surfaces, such as counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables, every day. Also, clean any surfaces that may have blood, stool, or body fluids on them. Use a household cleaning spray or wipe.
 - Wash laundry thoroughly.
 - Immediately remove and wash clothes or bedding that have blood, stool, or body fluids on them.
 - Wear disposable gloves while handling soiled items and keep soiled items away from your body. Clean your hands immediately after removing your gloves.
 - Place all used disposable gloves, face masks, and other contaminated items in a lined container before disposing of them with other household waste. Clean your hands (with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer) immediately after handling these items.

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/diseases-and-conditions/coronavirus-resource-center#Caregivers>

11. I'm older and have a chronic medical condition, which puts me at higher risk for getting seriously ill, or even dying from COVID-19. What can I do to reduce my risk of exposure to the virus?

Anyone 60 years or older is considered to be at higher risk for getting very sick from COVID-19. This is true whether or not you also have an underlying medical condition, although the sickest individuals and most of the deaths have been among people who were both older and had chronic medical conditions, such as heart disease, lung problems or diabetes.

The CDC suggests the following measures for those who are at higher risk:

- Obtain several weeks of medications and supplies in case you need to stay home for prolonged periods of time.
- Take [everyday precautions](#) to keep space between yourself and others.
- When you go out in public, keep away from others who are sick, limit close contact, and wash your hands often.
- Avoid crowds.
- Avoid cruise travel and nonessential air travel.
- During a COVID-19 outbreak in your community, stay home as much as possible to further reduce your risk of being exposed.

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/diseases-and-conditions/if-you-are-at-higher-risk><https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5302810/>

12. Who is at highest risk for getting very sick from COVID-19?

Older people, especially those with underlying medical problems like chronic bronchitis, emphysema, heart failure, or diabetes, are more likely to develop serious illness.

In addition, several underlying medical conditions may increase the risk of serious COVID-19 for individuals of any age. These include:

- blood disorders, such as sickle cell disease, or taking blood thinners
- chronic kidney disease
- chronic liver disease, including cirrhosis and chronic hepatitis
- any condition or treatment that weakens the immune response (cancer, cancer treatment, organ or bone marrow transplant, immunosuppressant medications, HIV or AIDS)
- current or recent pregnancy in the last two weeks
- diabetes
- inherited metabolic disorders and mitochondrial disorders
- heart disease, including coronary artery disease, congenital heart disease, and heart failure
- lung disease, including asthma, COPD (chronic bronchitis or emphysema)
- neurological and neurologic and neurodevelopment conditions such as cerebral palsy, epilepsy (seizure disorders), stroke, intellectual disability, moderate to severe developmental delay, muscular dystrophy, or spinal cord injury.

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/diseases-and-conditions/if-you-are-at-higher-risk>

References:

N van Doremalen, *et al.* Aerosol and surface stability of HCoV-19 (SARS-CoV-2) compared to SARS-CoV-1. *The New England Journal of Medicine*. DOI: 10.1056/NEJMc2004973 (2020).

<https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMc2004973>

1. CDC Coronavirus Recommendations: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
2. CDC Frequently Asked Questions: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#anchor_1584386949645
3. CDC Recommendation Regarding the Use of Cloth Face Coverings, Especially in Areas of Significant Community-Based Transmission: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html>