



WHAT IS COVID-19?

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. Patients with COVID-19 have experienced mild to severe respiratory illness, including fever, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel (new) coronavirus. It is not the same as other types of coronaviruses that commonly circulate among people and cause mild illness, like the common cold. The risk for severe illness from COVID-19 increases with age, with older adults at highest risk.

HOW DOES COVID-19 SPREAD?

The virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person, between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet for 15 minutes or longer) through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It may be 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, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. The best way to protect yourself and to help reduce the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19 is to limit your interactions with other people as much as possible and take precautions to prevent getting COVID-19 when you do interact with others. Those steps include wearing a face covering, maintaining social distance of 6 feet and washing your hands frequently. If you start feeling sick and think you may have COVID-19, get in touch with your healthcare provider within 24 hours.

LIMITING GROUP EVENTS

The coronavirus is often spread among groups of people who are in close contact in a confined space for an extended period of time. In-person services are permitted in much of the state beginning May 8, 2020, religious services, including wedding ceremonies and funeral services, may continue and will no longer be subject to the limits on social gatherings. However, social distancing and other sanitation measures continue to apply.

Social gatherings of up to 250 people may take place, and all gathering should follow social distancing guidelines of no contact closer than 6 feet apart for 15 minutes or longer. This applies to wedding receptions, parties, and other events where people are in close physical contact for extended periods of time, particularly in indoor locations. It is recommended that religious leaders verify local restrictions.

If implementing in-person services, consider the following practices:

- Ask all individuals who are 65 and older or who have an underlying at-risk health conditions to stay home and watch services online
- Ensure 6 feet between individuals or family units of the same households during services
- Space and mark seating, alternating rows when possible
- Clean between each service and regularly disinfect high-contact surfaces
- Place hand sanitizers in high-contact locations (e.g. bathroom, entry, exit) and ask staff, members and guests to sanitize their hands before entering the building



- Any person attending or engaged in a religious service as he or she must already maintain six feet of social distancing from another person not in the same household is exempt from the face covering requirement. Otherwise face coverings are required unless otherwise exempted, such as children younger than 2 years old.
- Consider placing signage telling staff, members and guests to not enter if they are symptomatic or if they tested positive for COVID-19
- Implement no-contact greetings
- Avoid handing out materials
- Keep cafes, coffee and other self-service stations closed
- Establish safe protocols for any communion and collection to avoid contact
- Dismiss services in a way that supports social distancing
- Place readily visible signage to remind everyone of best hygiene practices

CONSIDERATIONS FOR SCHOOLS

Under the current guidance for schools, all Indiana public school districts are able to open for the 2020-21 school year. Please reach out to your local school system for more information about reopening plans.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHURCHES

The CDC recommends the following tips for churches and community gathering spaces:

- Limit large nonessential gatherings.
- Wipe down everything touched by churchgoers, such as door handles, pew tops and railings with cleaning products.
- Avoid hugs and handshakes. Just wave or bow.
- Encourage people to wash their hands. Consider post reminders throughout the church and the community. Free shareable resources on handwashing are available from the CDC.
- Make hand sanitizers available throughout the church.
- Place tissue boxes in every pew.
- Review your church's emergency operations plans and communication plans.
- Advise congregation members to review their family emergency plans.
- Discourage panic and fear.
- Don't spread false information.
- Encourage congregation members to seek information only from reliable sources, such as the CDC and the Indiana State Department of Health.

IF YOU GET SICK

The best way to prevent illness from spreading within a family or community is to avoid exposure. Individuals who become mildly ill should isolate themselves from others.



- **People who are mildly ill can isolate at home during their illness.** 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, ridesharing or taxis.
- 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.
- **Avoid contact with animals.** When possible, have another member of your household care for your animals and livestock while you are sick.
- **Practice respiratory etiquette** (e.g., covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue or sleeve).
- **Practice frequent, proper handwashing** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or with hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- **Perform routine environmental cleaning.** Routinely clean and disinfect all frequently touched surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, countertops, etc.). Cleaning and disinfection products should include at least 70% alcohol or, if using a bleach solution, dilute 1/3-cup bleach per gallon of water. Other EPA-registered household disinfectants could also be used.
- **Follow isolation guidelines.** Even if you are feeling better, isolate yourself for at least seven days from when symptoms first appeared, and at least 24 hours after your temperature returns to normal naturally and symptoms have improved.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Questions about COVID-19 may be directed to the ISDH COVID-19 Call Center at the toll-free number 877-826-0011 (available 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.).