

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Preventing COVID-19 in People at Increased Risk of Severe Illness

This fact sheet is intended for people at greater risk of serious illness from COVID-19, such as older adults and people with chronic medical conditions. It will help you determine what you can do to decrease your risk of exposure to COVID-19.

Who is at increased risk?

Risk for hospitalization or death from COVID-19 increases with:

- Age, as you get older the risk increases, especially in older adults;
- Having a chronic medical condition including obesity, diabetes, lung/heart/kidney/liver diseases, stroke, high blood pressure, and conditions that weaken the immune system (e.g., some cancers, untreated HIV/AIDS);
- Taking medications that weaken the immune system (e.g., chemotherapy, oral steroid medications).

Protect yourself from COVID-19

Continue to follow all public health measures to reduce your risk of COVID-19 including:

- Getting fully vaccinated as soon as you are eligible to do so.
 - A person is considered fully vaccinated 14 days after receiving their second dose of a two-dose COVID-19 vaccine series.
 - While vaccines are effective at preventing COVID-19, no vaccine is 100% effective, so it is important to still follow public health recommendations to limit the spread of COVID-19.
- People at higher risk of severe disease need to have more strict adherence to recommended public health measures for protecting yourself against COVID-19, including physical distancing, wearing a mask, avoiding crowded, indoor, poorly ventilated spaces, and hand washing.
- Getting your influenza vaccine when available. This vaccine won't prevent COVID-19, but becoming ill with influenza may worsen your outcome if you also catch COVID-19.
- Choose less busy times to go shopping, and use delivery services or ask others to pick-up food and supplies for you.
- If you must use public transportation, choose less busy times when possible. If you must take a taxi or rideshare, wear a mask, ask the driver to wear a mask, sit in the back seat, and open the window.
- For more information on how to protect yourself from COVID-19, please see Public Health Ontario's fact sheet: [How to Protect Yourself from COVID-19](#).

Interacting with family, friends and others

- Guidance for meeting with family and friends will continue to evolve with Ontario's re-opening plan. Please continue to follow Public Health guidance on limiting the spread of COVID-19 and social gathering limits as advised by Public Health authorities.
- If you or someone you live with have been identified as being at high-risk of more severe disease, it is important to continue to exercise caution when meeting with people you do not live with.
- Because it may take 14 days before the vaccine offers full protection, consider waiting 14 days after your second dose of COVID-19 vaccine before coming into close contact with others. It is also important to consider whether people you come into close contact with are fully vaccinated as this will lower your risk.
- Visit with your friends and family outdoors whenever possible and if you must be indoors, open windows and doors to improve ventilations whenever possible.
- You can participate in social activities while adhering to recommended public health measures including gathering size restrictions, masking and physical distancing.
- If you have concerns about your or a loved one's mental health, seek help.

Resources

- Public Health Agency of Canada: [Vulnerable Populations and COVID-19](#)
- The Canadian Coalition for Seniors' Mental Health: [Tips for Battling Anxiety During this Public Health Situation](#)
- Ministry of Health: [Resources for Ontarians Experiencing Mental Health and Addictions Issues During the Pandemic](#)
- Canadian Cancer Society: [Cancer and COVID-19](#)
- About Kids Health: [Information for Parents of Immunocompromised Children and Children with Chronic Medical Conditions](#)
- Public Health Ontario:
 - [Multilingual COVID-19 Resources](#)
 - [How to Protect Yourself from COVID-19](#)
- Ontario: [Reopening Ontario](#)

Learn about the virus

To learn more and access up-to-date information on COVID-19, visit the Ontario Ministry of Health's website: ontario.ca/coronavirus.

The information in this document is current as of August 3, 2021