



Pandemics

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A pandemic is a disease outbreak that spans several countries and affects a large number of people. Pandemics are most often caused by viruses, like [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#), which can easily spread from person to person.

A new virus, like COVID-19, can emerge from anywhere and quickly spread around the world. It is hard to predict when or where the next new pandemic will emerge.

If a Pandemic is declared:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and try not to touch your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Keep a distance of at least six feet between yourself and people who are not part of your household.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a mask when in public.
- Clean and disinfect high-touch objects and surfaces.
- Stay at home as much as possible to prevent the spread of disease.
- Follow the guidance of the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#).



[Sign up for email updates about coronavirus from the CDC. Learn the symptoms of](#)



COVID-19 and follow CDC guidance.

How to Prepare Yourself for a Pandemic



Learn how diseases spread to help protect yourself and others. Viruses can be spread from person to person, from a non-living object to a person and by people who are infected but don't have any symptoms.

Prepare for the possibility of schools, workplaces and community centers being closed. Investigate and prepare for virtual coordination for school, work (telework) and social activities.

Gather supplies in case you need to stay home for several days or weeks. Supplies may include cleaning supplies, non-perishable foods, prescriptions and bottled water. Buy supplies slowly to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to buy what they need.

Create an emergency plan so that you and your family know what to do and what you will need in case an outbreak happens. Consider how a pandemic may affect your plans for other emergencies.

Review your health insurance policies to understand what they cover, including telemedicine options.

Create password-protected digital copies of important documents and store in a safe place. Watch out for scams and fraud.

Stay Safe During a Pandemic



Follow the latest guidelines from the [CDC](#). Refer to your local and state public health departments for vaccine and testing updates.

Get vaccinated once available. Vaccines stimulate your immune system to produce antibodies, so vaccines actually prevent diseases.

Take actions to prevent the spread of disease. Cover coughs and sneezes. Wear a mask in public. Stay home when sick (except to get medical care). Disinfect surfaces. Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol. Stay six feet away from people who are not part of your household.

If you believe you've been exposed to the disease, contact your doctor, follow the quarantine instructions from medical providers and monitor your symptoms. If you're experiencing a medical emergency, call 9-1-1 and shelter in place with a mask, if possible, until help arrives.

Share accurate information about the disease with friends, family and people on social media. Sharing bad information about the disease or treatments for the disease may have serious health outcomes. Remember that stigma hurts everyone and can cause discrimination against people, places or nations.

Know that it's normal to feel anxious or stressed. Engage virtually with your community through video and phone calls. Take care of your body and talk to someone if you are feeling upset.

Stay Safe After a Pandemic



- **Continue taking protective actions, like:**
 - Staying home when you are sick (except to get medical care).
 - Following the guidance of your health care provider.
 - Covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue.
 - Washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- **Be sure to evaluate your family emergency plan** and make timely updates.
- **Work with your community** to talk about the lessons you learned from the pandemic. Decide how you can use these experiences to be more prepared for future pandemics.

Associated Content

- [Coronavirus](#) (FEMA)
- [Novel Pandemic Info Sheet](#)
- [Coronavirus](#) (CDC)
- [Coronavirus](#) (EPA)
- [Talking with Children About Coronavirus Disease](#) (CDC)
- www.flu.gov (CDC)
- [Emergency Preparedness & Response](#) (CDC)
- [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#) (HHS)

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Disasters and Emergencies

All Hazards

Emergency Alerts

Attacks in Public Places

Avalanche

Bioterrorism

Chemical Emergencies
