LAYERS OF PROTECTION

Strategies to reduce COVID-19 infection and spread

People's CDC

Background: How to Live While COVID-19 is Spreading

The CDC is responsible for protecting the public's health, yet it has **largely abandoned collective and systemic measures to protect people from COVID-19**. Instead, since May 2021, the CDC has **gone against the foundations of public health** that are based on principles of collective responsibility, health equity, and human rights by declaring **"your health is in your hands."**

While the virus that causes COVID-19 continues to spread, we learn more each day about the dangerous health effects that can come from COVID infection (and re-infection), even for mild cases, even for vaccinated people, even in young people, and even in people with no pre-existing conditions.

Now, the responsibility for preventing COVID-19 infections has been placed almost entirely on individuals who have been told to self-assess their risk and figure out what protective steps to take, and when. Many key public health leaders and decision makers now downplay the risk of infection, refusing to take action unless community spread increases hospitalizations.

The People's CDC opposes the abandonment of policies that are proven to reduce COVID-19 transmission. To help us all understand the vast amount of information (including disinformation) about COVID-19, the People's CDC has prepared guidance based on scientific research about the protective measures we can use while the virus that causes COVID is still **spreading**.

We want you to have the best information about how to protect yourself and those around you from getting or transmitting COVID. This resource is a practical guide for how to avoid infection while COVID-19 is spreading and explains what layers of protection you can use to reduce COVID-19 transmissions.

We Recommend Using Layers of Protection

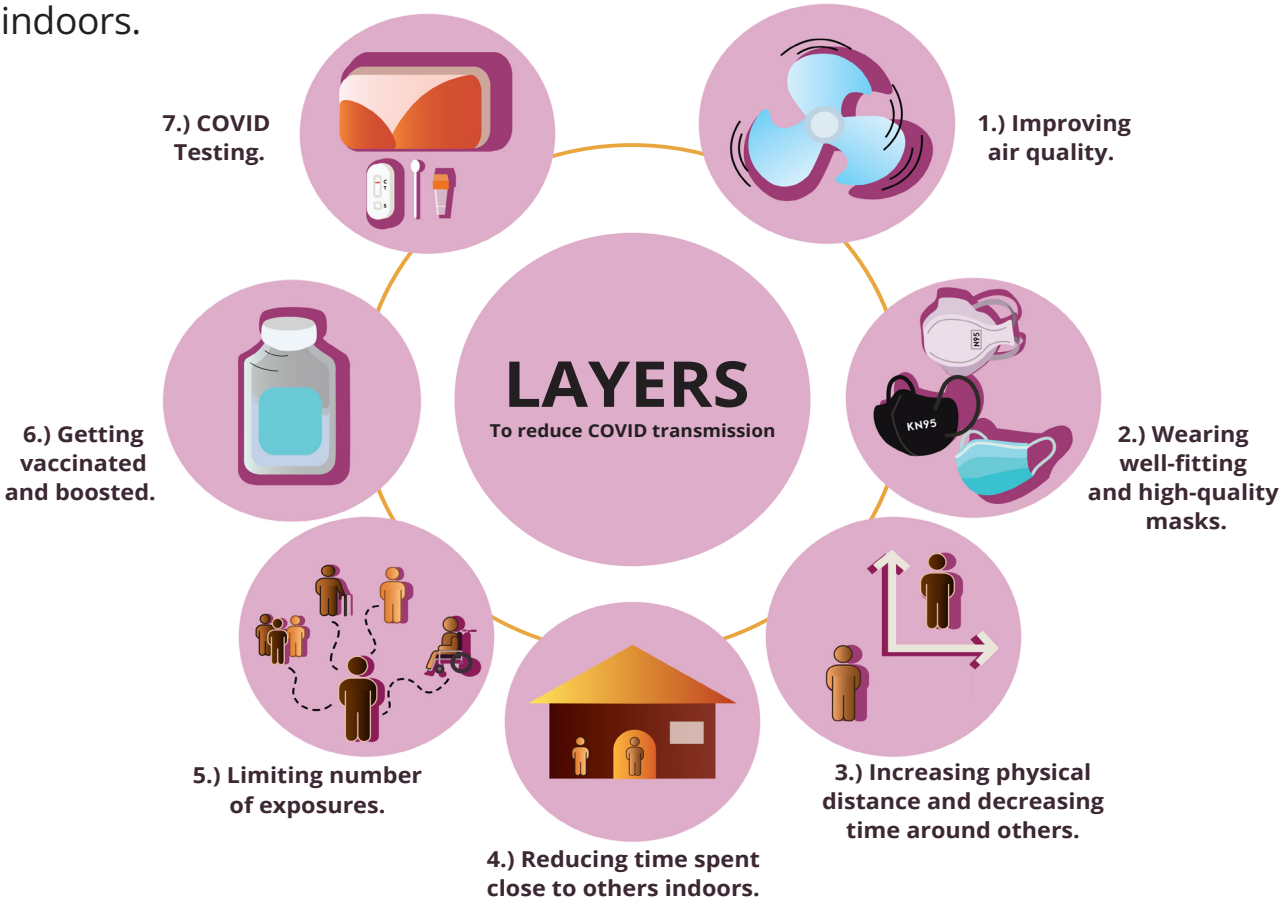
A lot has been learned about what protective measures will help keep us and others safer from COVID, and how well those measures work. We can think of these protective measures as **layers of protection**. The more layers we use to protect ourselves and others, the less likely we are to contract or transmit COVID—and the less opportunity the virus will have to spread.

COVID is spread most easily through the air. These four layers of protection will make it less likely for COVID to spread:

1. Improving indoor air quality.
2. Wearing well-fitting, high-quality masks.
3. Increasing physical distance.
4. Reducing time spent close to others indoors.

You can also reduce your chance of catching or spreading COVID with these three layers of protection:

5. Limiting the number of people you are around.
6. Getting your vaccine and recommended boosters, which helps decrease your risk of death and other health issues if you do catch COVID.
7. Testing to learn if someone has infection, whether they are symptomatic or asymptomatic, so they know to isolate and not infect others and to seek treatment.



The Layers of Protection People's CDC Recommends

1. Improving Indoor Air Quality

- Open windows for increased ventilation. Ideally, open windows on different walls for cross ventilation.
- Indoor air quality can be improved with portable air purifying units with HEPA filters or more affordable homemade versions of these, such as Corsi-Rosenthal boxes.*
- Outdoors is the best ventilation!

Check out the People's CDC Tipsheet on Improving Indoor Air Quality

COMING SOON!

*People's CDC points out drawbacks to Corsi/Rosenthal boxes in Appendix 3 of our Document, *Ventilation for Coronavirus in Schools.*

2. Wearing Masks: Well-Fitting and High-Quality are Key!

- The best well-fitting, high-quality masks to protect you and others from COVID are N95, KN95 or KF94 masks as these stop aerosols and droplets. N95s (also called N95 respirators) have a tighter fit because they have two straps that go over the head instead of ear loops.
- Masks worn correctly, covering the mouth and nose, help keep people from becoming infected with, or transmitting, COVID.

Check out the People's CDC Tipsheet on Masks

3. Increasing Physical Distance

- The more space between you and others, the less virus you are exposed to from an infected person breathing, talking, coughing or sneezing.
- It is often recommended you distance yourself 6 feet from others, but that was based on a misunderstanding of how virus particles travel. Large droplets from coughing or sneezing do drop to the floor after about 6 feet *on average*, but **can travel much farther**, depending on the forcefulness of the cough/sneeze and airspeed in the room.
- In an unventilated and unfiltered space. tiny particles of the virus (aerosols) can **linger for hours in the air and spread throughout a space** and you can be exposed at *any* location in the space.

Read more about airborne transmission

4. Reducing Time Spent Close to Others

- The **less time** we spend in situations where there is potential to be a lot of virus in the air, the less virus we are likely to breathe in and the lower our risk of infection.
- There is no specific number of minutes (or distance) that is proven to be safe indoors if unmasked.
- Examples of where there might be a lot of virus in the air are spaces where it is crowded, where people are close, and/or there is inadequate ventilation, including buses and trains, concert venues, and certain work environments.

Unfortunately there is limited data on COVID spreading outdoors in crowds. While there is excellent ventilation, being close to others could still spread COVID.

5. Limiting the Number of People You Are Around

- The fewer people we are exposed to, the less likelihood we have of becoming infected and of potentially infecting others.
- Because 40% of people with COVID have NO symptoms, it is very easy to have COVID without knowing it and to spread it unknowingly when around others.

This layer can be the hardest to control! We don't always have a choice over how many people we interact with where we live, where we go to school or work, on the bus or other public transit, or elsewhere in the community. If you cannot reduce the number of people you are around, you can use the other layers of protection listed here that you can control.

6. Getting Vaccinated and Staying Current on Recommended Vaccine Doses

- The best prevention and protection against severe illness and death from COVID is to be **up-to-date** on your vaccines, which includes getting your booster dose(s).
- Vaccinated and boosted people can get COVID, but they rarely get seriously ill, have to be hospitalized, or die from COVID.

Some immunocompromised individuals, depending on disease or treatment status, have reduced protection from COVID vaccines. It is important to stay up to date on booster shots available to immunocompromised individuals and use additional layers of protection discussed in this document whenever possible.

7. Testing

- There are two main types of testing for COVID-19: Rapid Antigen (Ag) tests (sometimes called At-Home tests) and PCR tests.
- Testing before gathering indoors and unmasked with people **increases the chance of identifying asymptomatic cases**.
- Use testing when experiencing **symptoms** to see if it is COVID.*

- It is recommended that testing be used to exit isolation. Antigen tests can be used after a confirmed positive case to see if you are no longer infectious.
- You may want to test when in quarantine, which is when you have been exposed to someone with COVID and you want to check in the 10 days following the exposure if you have become infected.
- Some schools, businesses, and people test routinely to try to check if anyone has asymptomatic infection to prevent spread.

**There will be cases that are not caught on PCR or Ag early in infection.*

Check out the People's CDC Tipsheet on Testing

COMING SOON!

Where and When Do I Apply These Layers of Protection?

Contrary to CDC's mostly individualist philosophy, the People's CDC recommends regular use of these Layers of Protection while COVID is spreading, because the more we use these layers, the more we work together to stop spreading COVID.

Here are examples of kinds of gatherings with people, types of places and activities where we recommend you apply layers of protection. While official government, school or business public health policies that support protections against COVID transmission are weakening or disappearing, the People's CDC encourages you to use these tools to reduce your chances of getting or transmitting COVID in a variety of settings.

Gatherings, such as with:

- Family and friends
- Children under age 5 (until they are eligible for vaccination)
- Immunocompromised people
- Un/undervaccinated people
- Other high-risk people such as pregnant people, people with chronic disease such as diabetes, heart disease, asthma, emphysema, kidney failure, or cirrhosis, disabled people, and people age 60+.

Places such as:

- Workplaces
- Schools
- Public transit
- Nursing homes
- Gyms
- Home when having guests over

In any public place, as listed here, where there may be vulnerable people: people who are immunocompromised, at high-risk, over 60, and those who are unvaccinated, including children under 5.

Activities such as:

- Working
- Traveling on public transit
- Shopping
- Eating indoors at restaurants
- Going to concerts
- Going to sporting events, especially ones indoors
- Going to the movies

For more resources, including a weekly weather report on COVID in the United States, visit *peoplescdc.org*, Follow us on *Twitter*, and join our *mailing list*.