



Interim Guidance:
Core Guidance During the COVID-19 Pandemic
November 03, 2021

Please note: After June 15, 2021, many of SFDPH's COVID-19 guidance documents will not be updated unless necessary. All SFDPH COVID-19 guidance documents are clearly marked to indicate the time of the last update. Documents that are no longer applicable will be removed.

AUDIENCE: Everyone.

San Francisco and the Bay Area have increasing vaccination rates which significantly reduces hospitalizations and deaths due to COVID-19. In connection with the State terminating the Blueprint for a Safer Economy as of June 15, 2021 and putting in its place new, limited COVID-19 guidance, the Health Officer has issued the [Safer Return Together Order C19-07y](#), which went into effect on June 15, 2021 and will continue until amended or rescinded by the Health Officer. Along with issuing this new order, the Health Officer [will be terminating many of the orders and directives relating to COVID-19](#), though some others will continue. The Health Officer's declaration of a health emergency arising from the pandemic also will continue to be in effect.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, it's *extra important* for everyone to get their **flu shot**. In past years, the flu has been responsible for thousands of hospitalizations or death in the United States. We need to prevent as much of the flu as we possibly can, so that our clinics and hospitals can focus on caring for patients who are ill with COVID-19. Frequent hand washing, wearing face masks, and social distancing also help to prevent both the flu and COVID-19. Check with your regular healthcare provider to schedule a flu shot. [San Francisco also offers free or low-cost flu vaccines to the public.](#)

Presented here is information about how COVID-19 is transmitted and health and safety measures to protect yourself and your community.

COVID-19 BASICS

How does COVID-19 spread?

COVID-19 is mostly spread from person-to-person in the air through virus-containing droplets in the breath of someone with COVID-19. These droplets enter the air when a person breathes. More droplets can get in the air when infected people talk, sing, cough, or sneeze. Some people with COVID-19 have no symptoms, or their symptoms may be so mild that they do not notice them; these people may still be breathing out virus-containing droplets that can infect others.

COVID-19 can also spread if a person touches their eyes, nose, or mouth after touching a contaminated surface (also known as a fomite), however this is less common.

People at risk for severe illness with COVID-19, such as unvaccinated [older adults](#) and unvaccinated people with certain medical conditions, including pregnant and recently pregnant people should remain very cautious if participating in activities with other people outside their **household**, especially in indoor, poorly ventilated or crowded spaces and particularly when protective measures such as wearing face masks may not be used.



How can I protect myself against COVID-19?

- [Get vaccinated](#) as soon as you can! Vaccination remains the most effective way to protect yourself and others.
- [Wear a face covering](#) for added protection. Cover your mouth and nose with a mask when indoors and close to people who don't live in your household. While anyone may wear a mask for more protection, doing so is especially important for people who are not fully vaccinated. Remain aware of the [level of viral spread in the community](#) and the most current public health mandates and [orders](#). Stay up to date by visiting the [California Department of Public Health COVID-19 website](#).
- [Outdoors is much safer than indoors](#). Avoid crowded, poorly-ventilated indoor activities if you are at risk of severe illness from COVID-19, or if you live with or could expose someone who is at risk of severe illness from COVID-19.
- [Monitor your health daily](#). Be alert of symptoms such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms. If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, stay home, seek medical care when necessary, and [get tested](#).
- [Wash your hands often with soap and water](#). If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

What should I know about the COVID-19 vaccine?

The vaccine is one of the most important ways to end the pandemic because vaccines are extremely effective at preventing hospitalization and death. Vaccines for COVID-19 are safe, effective, and free. The FDA, CDC, and California's own Scientific Safety Review Workgroup have reviewed data from clinical trials to ensure the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines. **We strongly encourage all eligible persons to get vaccinated.** Find out more about vaccines, including where and when to get it at: sf.gov/covidvax. For up-to-date information about the vaccines, see the CDC's [Key Things to Know about COVID-19 Vaccines](#) web page.

Can I act differently if I am fully vaccinated?

[Fully vaccinated people](#) have a **much** lower risk of hospitalization and death from COVID-19. However, fully vaccinated people still need to follow guidance at their workplace and local businesses.

If you are fully vaccinated and have a close contact with someone with COVID-19, you should get tested 5-7 days after your exposure, even if you have no symptoms. For more information visit the [California Department of Public Health web page](#).

Is it necessary to check temperatures and COVID symptoms at the door?

No.

On-site, pre-entry health checks have limited benefit in preventing spread of COVID-19. SFDPH does not require that organizations perform on-site, pre-entry health checks for patrons or employees. This includes screening for symptoms of COVID-19, asking about close contact with others who have COVID-19, measuring temperatures, or verifying completion of remote self-screening.

Individuals should monitor themselves for COVID-19 symptoms or exposures, and businesses and governmental entities should ask employees to evaluate their own symptoms before reporting to work.



If anyone has symptoms, they should isolate, get tested, and seek medical care when necessary.

Organizations may choose to continue on-site health checks or verify remote self-screening and, in some cases, state and other regulatory agencies may require it. If an organization conducts on-site health checks, it should be done safely, respectfully, and in accordance with applicable privacy and confidentiality laws. For additional resources see sfdcp.org/screen.

What happens if I test positive or have been exposed?

Please call the COVID Resource Center (CRC) at (628) 217-6101. The CRC provides guidance on how to safely isolate or quarantine and for how long and resources such as food, cleaning supplies, financial assistance, and mental health support if you need to stay away from others for a period of time.

How can I use my building's ventilation system (HVAC) most effectively?

You can improve the effectiveness of your mechanical ventilation by setting it to maximize the intake of outdoor air and minimize the recirculation of indoor air. Have your HVAC system checked by a professional to make sure that it is operation properly and investigate whether it is possible to use higher efficiency air filters with your system. If you can, keep your ventilation operating even during times when the building is not being used. For more information about ventilation, see [California Department of Public Health's Ventilation guidance](#).

Should I keep windows and door open?

Yes. Open windows and doors to bring in fresh air from outside, but only when health and safety allow. Do not prop open fire doors and make sure that open windows do not pose a fall risk for children.

Are there other ways to improve ventilation?

Consider using portable air cleaners ("HEPA filters"), especially in spaces that are poorly ventilated. Fans can also help to disperse droplets and particles, but make sure that the fan is not blowing the air from one individual's space to another's.

RESOURCES

Center for Disease Control (CDC) Guidance

- [Guidance for COVID-19](#) (searchable)
- [Vaccines for COVID-19](#)

California Department of Public Health (CDPH)

- [Find All Guidance](#)
- [Guidance for Fully Vaccinated People](#)
- [Guidance for Testing](#)
- [Guidance for Face Coverings](#)
- [CA Notify](#)



San Francisco

- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Outreach toolkit for Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Get Tested](#)
- [Get Vaccinated](#)
- [Isolation and Quarantine](#)
- [San Francisco Flu Shot locations](#)