Interim Guidance:
Core Guidance During the COVID-19 Pandemic
June 11, 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 Documents that are no longer applicable will be removed.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.

COVID-19 BASICS

How does COVID-19 spread?

Our current understanding is that 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, should remain caution 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. Fully vaccinated people are no longer required to wear a facemask during most activities, except while on public transit, in healthcare settings, and in a few other places. Stay up to date by visiting the California Department of Public Health COVID-19 website.

- 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 illness and transmission. 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](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/key-things.html) web page.

**Can I act differently if I am fully vaccinated?**

Yes. [Fully vaccinated people](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html) are at much lower risk of getting sick and spreading COVID-19 to others. Fully vaccinated people may not need to **quarantine** after travel or after close contact with someone with COVID-19, if they have no symptoms. They are also not required to face-coverings in most settings. For more information visit the [California Department of Public Health web page](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/Aerophe/Documents/Covid-19-Fully-Vaccinated.pdf).

**What is CA Notify?**

[CA Notify](https://canotify.ca.gov) is an app you can add on your smartphone. It uses Bluetooth technology to recognize when you and your phone have been in close proximity to others infected with COVID-19 to help stop the spread of the virus in our community.

If you are using CA Notify and you test positive, your diagnosis will not be shared with others. However, if other people were in close contact with you are also enrolled in the app, they will be told they had an exposure. They will be told the date of the exposure, but not the time, location or identity.

If you are using CA Notify and you were exposed to someone who tested positive and they entered their result into the app, you will be told the date of the exposure, but not the time, location or identity.

CA Notify is available through Apple and Google. See canotify.ca.gov for more information.

**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, particularly as infections decrease and more people get vaccinated. 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 sfcdcp.org/screen.

**Will SFDPH continue to contact trace?**

Yes. The San Francisco Department of Public Health, in partnership with community, helps identify those who have had close contact with anyone who has COVID-19. People can transmit the virus 2 days before they develop symptoms. Some people never develop symptoms and can still transmit the virus. We can help prevent COVID-19 transmission by identifying people who may have been exposed and helping them stay away from others, if necessary, so they don’t inadvertently spread the disease. We also do this to protect the community’s health when there is an outbreak of infectious diseases such as measles and tuberculosis.
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 operating 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.

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.

Email Ventilation questions to: dph.doc.ventilation@sfdph.org

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

San Francisco

- Coronavirus (COVID-19)
- Outreach toolkit for Coronavirus (COVID-19)
- Get Tested
- Get Vaccinated
- Isolation and Quarantine