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and may contain outdated information.

See guidance provided by the CDC at  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/multifamily-housing.html>



## COVID-19 Interim Guidance for Multifamily Residential Buildings

Updated February 11, 2021

The following guidance was developed by the San Francisco Department of Public Health for use by local facilities, and will be posted at <http://www.sfdcdp.org/covid19>. This interim guidance may change as information is updated.

**AUDIENCE:** Building owners and managers, staff, and residents of apartment buildings, condominiums, and multifamily unit dwellings.

**BACKGROUND:** San Francisco currently has community-wide transmission of COVID-19. All San Francisco residents should stay home as much as possible, consider that they can be exposed to COVID-19, and be alert for developing symptoms of COVID-19. People who develop COVID-19 generally experience mild illness and will be able to recover at home. Building residents are not required to inform building management or neighbors if they are sick or test positive for COVID-19. The most effective measures building owners and managers can take to reduce possible exposures and reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 among residents and staff are the use of facial coverings, social distancing, and routine environmental cleaning.

Generally, indoor activities have much higher risks for COVID-19. Please see Indoor Risk During the COVID-19 Pandemic, below, for information about indoor risks. The Guidance for Indoor Risk During the COVID-19 Pandemic (includes bibliography) can be found at [sfdcdp.org/indoorrisk](http://sfdcdp.org/indoorrisk).

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### Summary of Revisions since the 5/6/2020 Version

- Includes information about COVID-19 and how it spreads, the risks of indoor activity with a recommendation to get tested if experiencing symptoms.
- Includes information about CA Notify and a recommendation to get a COVID-19 vaccination when it becomes available.
- Added information about contact tracing and an explanation about what is a close contact.
- Provides conditions for using indoor and outdoor spaces and amenities in alignment with current Health Directives and Orders.
- Includes more complete signage requirements.

## COVID-19 Information

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. Even more droplets can get in the air when infected people talk, sing, cough, or sneeze. People with COVID-19 may have no symptoms and can still be breathing out virus-containing droplets that can infect others. Transmission can occur through:

- Larger droplets. These larger droplets are sometimes called “ballistic droplets” because they travel in straight lines and are pulled down by gravity. People nearby, usually within 6 feet, are infected when they breathe in these droplets or if the droplets land in their eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Smaller droplets or infectious particles. These can float in the air for a period of time and/or travel beyond 6 feet on indoor air currents, especially in enclosed spaces with poor ventilation. People sharing the same space are infected when they breathe in these smaller droplets and particles or the droplets or particles land on their eyes, nose, or mouth – even if they are further than 6 feet away. These droplets are sometimes referred to as “aerosols” or “bioaerosols”.



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.

### Prevention

- [Wash your hands often with soap and water](#). If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% ethanol or 70 % isopropanol.
- [Avoid Close Contact](#). To the greatest extent, maintain at least six feet of social distancing between yourself and the people who don't live in your Household.
- [Wear a Face Covering](#). Cover your mouth and nose with a Face Covering in public settings and when around people who don't live in your Household.
- Routinely [clean and disinfect](#) frequently touched surfaces.
- [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, and get tested.

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### CA Notify – Another Way for Us to Stop the Spread

- CA Notify ([canotify.ca.gov](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 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](https://canotify.ca.gov) for more information.

See guidance provided by the CDC at  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/multi-family-housing.html>

### COVID-19 Vaccine Is Here

The vaccine is one of the most important ways to end the pandemic. The FDA, CDC as well as California's own Scientific Safety Review Workgroup have reviewed all data from clinical trials to ensure the safety and effectiveness of all COVID-19 vaccines. **When the vaccine is available to you**, step up for your health, the health of your loved ones, the health of your community, and **get vaccinated**. The first vaccines approved in the US are about 95% effective in preventing sickness from COVID-19, however we do not know how well they prevent infections that do not cause symptoms. This means that we do not know how common it is for a person who got the vaccine to carry the virus and transmit to others, including those who have increased risk for severe illness or death. Therefore, it is still very important for those who are vaccinated, and for the rest of the population who waits for their vaccines, to continue using all the tools available to help stop this pandemic: wear a mask that covers your mouth and nose when outside your home, avoid get-togethers/gatherings, avoid being indoors with people you don't live with, stay at least 6 feet away from others, and wash your hands after touching shared objects or after touching your face. Find out more about the vaccine, including where and when to get it at: [sf.gov/covidvax](https://sf.gov/covidvax)

Flu vaccines are critical in the fight against COVID-19 by (1) keeping workers and communities healthy and (2) reducing strain on our healthcare and testing systems that are responding to COVID-19. Those over the age of 6 months are strongly encouraged to get a flu shot. Find out how to get one at [www.sfcddcp.org/flu](https://www.sfcddcp.org/flu)



## Guidance for Building Residents

### Measures Residents Can Take to Prevent Spread of COVID-19 in the Building:

- Stay home (especially if you are sick).
- Limit non-essential trips outside the home (essential trips include groceries, health care, gas).
- Wear a face covering or mask whenever outside of your apartment or home.
- Never consume food or beverages in the common areas of the building.
- Do not share personal items like drinking glasses, eating utensils, and towels with other people.
- Call the management office or the front desk rather than coming in person, whenever possible. Maintain proper physical distance if you need to speak with management or staff directly.
- Avoid taking the elevator with people from outside of your household to prevent close contact in an enclosed space. Occupants from different households should stand near the four corners of the elevator and away from each other and wear cloth face coverings. Consider taking the stairs or waiting for the next elevator to avoid contact and crowding.
- If you are not an essential worker, and not leaving the building to go to work, use common spaces after 9 am and before 5PM to help alleviate traffic in those areas.
- Only allow visitors who are providing essential services. This includes services that cannot wait and cannot be done over the phone or online.
- Limit your online purchases of essentials to reduce traffic in mailrooms and lobbies.
- Avoid visits to other tenants except to provide assistance. Consider creative ways to connect with others from a distance. Use phone calls, conference calls, and online video conferencing for work, meetings, and to stay in touch with friends and family.
- Be aware that some construction and emergency repairs may need to continue in your building to address unsafe conditions and other needs that cannot wait. If workers do need to enter your unit for repairs, open windows before they arrive, wear a face covering and maintain at least 6 feet away from them while they are in the unit.
- Frequently disinfect and clean high touch surfaces. This includes phones, keyboards, kitchen countertops, toilets, faucets and doorknobs. Standard cleaning products are effective against COVID-19; see section on Environmental Cleaning, above.
- When permitted under [current Health Directives or Orders](#), follow safety guidelines when using shared outdoor amenities like decks, playgrounds and swimming pools.
- Review CDC's guidance for household members, Get Your Home Ready

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/get-your-household-ready-for-COVID-19.html>



## Guidance For Building Managers and Owners

### Measures that Building Owners and Managers Can Take to Prevent Spread of COVID-19 in the Building:

- Implement policies and practices for social distancing:
- Encourage residents and staff to practice physical distancing of 6 feet and to wear a cloth face mask or other face covering at all times in common areas of the building.
- Building staff and occupants should maintain social distancing when getting packages or mail, and when entering or exiting the building.
- In a large building where packages may be left in the lobby or with front desk staff, building staff may consider assisting building occupants by dropping deliveries outside of their door.
- Some food delivery services also have a section for “special instructions” where individuals can enter more information and requests, for example, that packages be delivered to the door, or to text/call and leave packages at the door, in an effort to minimize person-to-person contact and touching of surfaces.
- Postpone non-urgent maintenance or showings. Any staff or other people entering a unit should wash their hands, wear a facial covering, maintain social distancing and clean and disinfect work areas afterwards.
- Post signage limiting the number of people from different households in the elevator.
- Close or limit access to common areas such as gyms, party rooms, lounges, and swimming pools as these are areas where it may become difficult to maintain social distancing.
- Limit use of common spaces, like pet relief areas, computer labs, and storage rooms. Only use these spaces if people can stay at least 6 feet apart from each other at all times.
- Residents can continue to use shared laundry rooms. If the room is small, building management should post signage and limit the number of people using the laundry room at the same time to ensure social distancing. Additional signage for use of shared laundry facilities is available; see <https://www.sfcddcp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/COVID19-Using-Shared-Laundry-Facilities-FINAL-04.15.2020.pdf>

### Air circulation

- Open windows to increase natural ventilation with outdoor air when health and safety allow.
  - When possible, consider also leaving room doors within common areas slightly open to promote flow of outdoor air through the indoor space.
  - Do not prop or wedge open fire doors. Continue to follow fire and building safety requirements.
  - If open windows pose a risk of falls for children, use window locks to keep windows from opening more than 4 inches, or other safety devices to prevent falls

### Perform routine environmental cleaning:

- Assign staff to make sure that common areas such as lobbies, elevators, laundry rooms and stairwells are frequently cleaned and disinfected. See <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>
- Clean and disinfect daily all frequently touched surfaces such as door handles, stairway railings, elevator buttons, reception desks, push plates and laundry room equipment.
- If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.



- For disinfection, most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective. A list of products that are EPA-approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19 is available at <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.).

**Support staff in practicing social distancing and in following the Stay Home order.**

- Allow staff to telecommute and use flexible leave time wherever possible.
- Post information in staff areas, common spaces, and entry points about actions everyone should take to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Share information about COVID-19 with residents in multiple languages.
- Provide guidance to staff on social distancing, hand hygiene and protective gear for their duties.

Find these materials on SF.gov at: <https://sf.gov/outreach-toolkit-coronavirus-covid-19>

**Managing the Use of Commons**

**Post signs in the common areas like entrances, lobbies, garages, bike rooms, and mailrooms reminding Residents and Employees:**

- To maintain social distance, wear Face Coverings, use hand sanitizer or wash their hands before and after touching common surfaces or items, and to stay home if they feel ill.
- That COVID-19 can be spread by individuals who do not feel sick or show outward symptoms of infection.
- Of social distancing based on capacity limits for elevators and safe behavior on elevators, escalators and staircases
  - To keep at least six feet distance from others in elevators, on escalators, and in stairways, and to sanitize and wash hands frequently, especially after touching a handrail or other commonly touched item.
  - To wear Face Coverings and encouraging silent rides in the elevators (“no talking”).

**Post signs at public entrances that:**

- COVID-19 is transmitted through the air and that the risk is much higher indoors.
- Seniors and those with health risks should avoid indoor settings with crowds.
- Inform Residents and Employees how to report violations of COVID-19 health orders.

Find these materials online at: <https://sf.gov/outreach-toolkit-coronavirus-covid-19>

**Manage visitors**

- Limit access to visitors. Continue to allow essential visitors, like home care workers, healthcare workers, and emergency maintenance.
- Encourage residents to connect with family and friends by phone and/or online and to postpone visits that are not essential.
- If possible, limit visitor access to a single point of entry in your building that staff can easily monitor.
- Post signs at entrances instructing essential visitors to not enter if they are sick or if they have had close contact with a person who may have or does have COVID-19.



- Post signs that tell visitors to limit their movement in the building and their use of common areas.
- Conduct virtual tours of apartments and condominiums using apps such as FaceTime or Google Duo. If that is not an option, send photographs of the living space to potential residents.
- If you must conduct an in-person tour, ensure that all people stay at least 6 feet apart. Do not allow more than two people in a unit at a time. For instance, allow the prospective resident to view rooms while staff stay outside or in a different room.
- Before conducting an in-person tour of an occupied unit, always get full consent from the current tenant. If the tenant refuses, conduct the tour virtually.

### These Areas May Possibly Be Open with Restrictions

Spaces may need to be closed or blocked off and equipment may need to be removed according to the restrictions within current Health Orders or Directives. If spaces are re-opened or activities allowed again, they must follow separate specific guidelines.

#### Outdoor Shared Spaces

- Decks and roof decks may be open if safe physical distancing can be maintained and there is posted signage about physical distancing and the use of facial coverings.
- Outdoor Playgrounds may be open when permitted by current Health Directives and Orders if all relevant guidance is followed including physical distancing, facial coverings, cleaning and disinfecting, signage, capacity limits, and adequate supervision. See Guidance for Outdoor Playgrounds. <https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/covid-guidance/2020-36-Guidance-Playgrounds.pdf>
- Outdoor pools may be open when permitted by current Health Directives and Orders if the facility fulfills all the requirements detailed in the Health Directive for Outdoor Swimming Pools. <https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/files/Directive-2020-24-Pools.pdf>

#### Indoor Shared Spaces

- **Business Centers /Business Lounges, Dog Washing / Grooming Rooms, Music Practice Rooms may open with:**
  - A signup sheet with name/unit # to reserve times (to facilitate contact tracing if someone later becomes COVID-positive).
  - Supplies to clean/disinfect in between use (door handles, desks, chairs, other equipment, etc.)
  - Limited capacity to comply with social distancing (at least 6 feet between people). Remove excess chairs, furniture, equipment.
- **Mail rooms** – with posted social distance reminders.
- **Gyms and Fitness Centers, Indoor Personal Services** like yoga studios, saunas, spas, game rooms, indoor play areas, entertainment centers and **Movie Theaters** may be opened **when permitted by current Health Directives and Orders** if the spaces fulfill all the requirements detailed in the relevant Directive or Order. These requirements usually include a separate Health and Safety Plan for each space and have ventilation and signage requirements.

Health Orders and Directives are posted at <https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/coronavirus-healthorders.asp>

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### Be Aware of Residential Construction Guidelines

- Under the new May 5<sup>th</sup> Health Order, all construction projects can resume, provided they comply with the Construction Project Safety Protocols issued as part of the Order (see <https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/coronavirus-healthorders.asp>)
- Supervisors of construction activity must take steps to protect both workers and residents. Supervisors should ensure all individuals stay at least 6 feet apart, provide handwashing or sanitizing stations between units, provide face protection for workers, and take other steps.

### Monitor Staff Health

- [Screen staff](#) in person or by phone for symptoms of the virus at the start of every day. Anyone with a fever, chills, repeated shaking/shivering, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, feeling unusually weak or fatigued, new loss of taste or smell, muscle pain, headache, runny or congested nose or diarrhea should not come to work.
- People at high risk of infection should also not come to work. Risk factors include being age 60 and over, having an underlying health condition (e.g., high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, lung disease), or a weakened immune system, and being pregnant.

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### Work Safely in Residential Units

- Limit maintenance work in units as much as feasible. Staff who need to enter a resident's unit should:
- Wash hands or use sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol content) before entering. Wear clean gloves if possible.
- Keep at least 6 feet of distance from residents.
- Disinfect all work surfaces before leaving the unit.
- Wear face protection – cloth facial coverings are sufficient as long as the worker can maintain proper physical distancing. If splashes or spills are anticipated, wear gloves, and eye protection and remove any soiled clothing after the visit.

**See guidance provided by the CDC at**

**<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/multifamily-housing.html>**

### Take Precautions if You Have a Case in Your Housing Community

- If you believe someone in your housing community has or may have COVID-19, do not share their personal health information. The person's identity is protected health information.
- Clean and disinfect thoroughly according to CDC recommendations: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>
- If the identity of a case is known, visitors and staff should not enter the unit. If emergency repairs are needed, the resident should open all windows, wear a surgical mask and stay at least 6 feet from the worker, preferably remaining in another room. Those entering the units should wear face masks and disposable gloves and maintain at least 6 feet from the resident.
- It is not necessary to alert residents about possible cases.

### Contact Tracing

The San Francisco Department of Public Health, in partnership with community, including businesses, helps identify those who have had close contact with anyone who has COVID-19. People can transmit the virus 48 hours before they develop symptoms. Some people never develop symptoms and can still transmit the virus. We can help prevent COVID-19 transmission by contact tracing which helps identify people who may have been exposed and helping them quarantine so they don't inadvertently spread the disease. We do this whenever there is an outbreak of infectious diseases like measles, tuberculosis, and others to protect the



community's health.

Help ensure the health of your personnel, residents, and our community. Retain the attendance/schedules of all personnel at your organization for up to three weeks. It is recommended that organizations maintain a list of residents willing to voluntarily provide their name and contact information for contact tracing purposes. Any lists should be discarded after three weeks. Patrons are not required to provide contact information.

If personnel or a contractor tests positive for COVID-19, the organization must assist the Department of Public Health in identifying other personnel or [clients/participants/patrons/fellow worshipers/personnel] who may have been exposed.

Cover your face, test early, and trace! Find out more at <https://covid19.ca.gov/contact-tracing>

**What is a Close Contact?**

A close contact is someone who was within 6 feet of a person with COVID-19 for a period of time that adds up to at least 15 minutes in 24 hours, masked or unmasked, when that person was contagious. People with COVID-19 are considered contagious starting 48 hours before their symptoms began until: 1) they haven't had a fever for at least 24 hours, 2) their symptoms have improved, AND 3) at least 10 days have passed since their symptoms began. If the person with COVID-19 never had symptoms, then they are considered contagious starting 48 hours before their test that confirmed they have COVID-19 until 10 days after the date of that test

**What should I do if I think I have been exposed to COVID-19?**

- Please contact your healthcare provider for advice, and follow guidance from the San Francisco Department of Public Health, which is frequently updated at <https://www.sfgdcp.org/covid19>

Additional information can be found on how to [safely isolate and quarantine.](#)

**What if a Resident has been Diagnosed with COVID-19 or was Determined to Be a Close Contact of Someone Diagnosed with COVID-19, and is Known to be in Isolation or Quarantine in their Residence?**

- These residents may choose to self-identify and may ask for assistance to allow them to isolate or quarantine. However, their identity should not be disclosed to other residents.

**Recommended practices in this situation include:**

- **Service Requests and Apartment Access:** Suspend access to the apartment for routine maintenance, repairs, and inspections. The apartment should only be entered for emergency repairs. If an emergency repair is needed:
  - Advise the resident to open all windows in the apartment while the repair staff is there.
  - Instruct the resident to remain in a part of the apartment away from where the repair will take place and wear a face covering while the repair staff is in the apartment.
- **Package Deliveries:** Leave packages outside the apartment door to avoid close contact with self-isolating or -quarantining resident. Work out an arrangement for notifying people when packages arrive.
- **Garbage Disposal:** Schedule door-side garbage pick-up. Instruct the resident to leave garbage bags outside the front door of the unit.
- **Pet Care:** Since residents will not be allowed to leave their unit except to seek medical care, they may have to employ services such as dog walkers to care for their pets.



- **Vendor Services:** Vendors who regularly provide services within apartments should be notified that service is suspended to the apartment in question, without advising them of the reason for the suspension. If you offer door-side trash pickup, that may continue.
- **Medical Visits:** If the resident needs to leave the unit for a necessary medical visit instruct them to use a face mask or face covering at all times while in the complex and parking lot and outside of their unit.
- **Contacts to the Case:** Residents who have (or are suspected of having) COVID-19 are required to notify their contacts of a potential exposure and inform them of the need to be in quarantine; this is not a responsibility of the apartment manager. But the apartment manager should take the precautions noted above to prevent staff and others from getting exposed.
  - **Resident Wellness Checks:** Consider offering a phone check-in service for tenants who live alone to ensure their health and safety while under quarantine or isolation.
  - Continued frequent cleaning of common areas will help to reassure other tenants if a resident chooses to share with others that they are in quarantine or are self-isolating.

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#### Protecting Resident and Employee Privacy

- Do not share information about the health and status of the self-quarantining/isolating resident or affected employee with other residents or employees. There is also no reason to notify Public Health of any cases in your building, nor will Public Health notify the property or building manager/owner of any cases residing in the building.

See guidance provided by the CDC at

#### Resources

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/multifamily-housing.html>

Stay informed. Information is changing rapidly. Useful resources can be found at:

- San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFPDH)
  - <https://www.sfdcp.org/covid19>
- Living In Shared Housing (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
  - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/shared-housing/index.html>
- Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information for Businesses, Employers, and Employees (SFPDH)
  - <https://www.sfdcp.org/infectious-diseases-a-to-z/coronavirus-2019-novel-coronavirus/coronavirus-2019-businesses/>
- FAQs For San Francisco Health Orders (SFPDH)
  - <https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/files/Stay-Safe-at-Home-COVID-19-FAQs.pdf>