

<https://covid19.colorado.gov/about-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk-for-severe-illness/covid-19-and-people-with-chronic-disease>

Certain people are at higher risk of getting very sick from COVID-19, including people who have chronic medical conditions like heart, lung, or kidney disease, or diabetes. ([CDC: People who are at higher risk for severe illness.](#)) [Newer evidence](#) also suggests COVID-19 can lead to heart attacks and cardiac arrest.

Protecting yourself and your loved ones from COVID-19.

Take extra precaution by physical distancing.

Continue to manage your condition at home and in partnership with your health care providers. Taking care of your health is critical to reducing your need for in-person health care and possible exposure to the COVID-19 in a health care setting and to addressing your disease. It's never a bad time to take steps to improve your health. Eat well. Get plenty of rest and exercise. And follow your doctor's instructions.

How can I take care of myself and those I care about?

By staying at home and staying apart, we are coming together to help reduce everyone's risks. But it is not easy for anyone, particularly for those who have lost their job, are caring for others, or who are experiencing other challenges. Remember to care for yourself as much as you are caring for others. Take care of yourself as best you can.

1. **Reduce your risk for contracting the virus.** Follow public health recommendations, including physical distancing guidance. People at higher-risk are strongly encouraged to stay at home at all times, except when they need necessary medical care. (For those who need assistance - [start with these helpful resources.](#))
2. **Prevent COVID-19 while managing your chronic disease.** If you have a chronic condition, focus on prevention and management. Staying healthy at home means staying out of the hospital or emergency room where your risks for getting COVID-19 are higher.
 - [Use telehealth or nurselines](#) to manage your condition so that you don't have to go into the clinic.
 - Follow all treatment plans that you and your doctor created, to the extent possible.
3. **Seek medical care if you need it.** Watch for [COVID-19 symptoms](#) and seek medical care if you need it. Remember, you should call 911 if you are experiencing a medical emergency. This includes symptoms of heart attack or stroke; difficulty breathing or choking; difficulty speaking, walking, or seeing; an allergic reaction; confusion, dizziness, or disorientation; sudden, severe pain.

How can I take care of myself ...

If I have diabetes or prediabetes.

- **If you have diabetes, keep it under control.** [Initial research](#) shows that having diabetes may worsen the outcomes of COVID-19. Follow your doctor's orders for checking your blood sugar and maintaining a healthy diet. Ensure you have adequate supplies of testing equipment and medications on hand. To find a diabetes management program in your area, visit the [American Diabetes Association](#) or [Association of Diabetes Care and Education Specialists](#).
- **If you have prediabetes or at risk of diabetes, keep elevated blood sugar from getting out of control.** Find virtual diabetes prevention programs, which allow you to work with a trained coach to make realistic, lasting lifestyle changes. These programs also provide information on eating healthy and being active, managing stress, staying motivated and solving problems that can slow your progress, and they help enable you to get support from people with similar goals and challenges. Visit www.preventdiabetesco.org if you are in the metro Denver area or doihaveprediabetes.org outside of the metro areas.

If I am managing heart and cardiovascular conditions.

- **Keep your blood pressure under control by eating well, maintaining a healthy weight, increasing physical activity, and managing stress.** Continue to monitor and track your own blood pressure at home with a home blood pressure monitor, if you have one. High blood pressure is the most common comorbidity seen in [patients hospitalized for COVID-19](#).
- Stay up-to-date on other vaccinations that can protect you from diseases that stress your heart, including pneumonia and the flu.
- Limit alcohol and limit salt.
- Continue to take your medications as prescribed. Talk with your doctor or pharmacist if you have questions.

If I use tobacco.

- **Consider quitting smoking or vaping.** Individuals who smoke or vape may be at [higher risk](#) for developing severe illness from COVID-19. Smoking can cause or worsen many chronic health conditions, including heart diseases linked to poorer COVID-19 outcomes. Smoking and vaping can also increase the possibility for the virus to be transmitted from hands to mouth.
 - Quitting is hard, especially during times of stress. The Colorado QuitLine offers phone and web coaching, motivational text messages, and quit medications like patches and gum. Visit www.coquitline.org or call 1-800-QUIT-NOW for free support without judgment.
- **Keep a smoke-free home to protect others.** Secondhand smoke worsens lung health for nonsmokers, especially children.

If I have any of these chronic conditions:

- **Continue to take your medications on time and as directed** to manage your high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, asthma and/or COPD. Reach out to your health care provider to get an extra supply of medications in case you cannot get to the pharmacy or clinic or see if your prescriptions can be delivered to your home.

- **Manage your stress and take care of your mental health.** Recognize when you are experiencing fear and stress. [Identify](#) what you are afraid of and figure out if you can address that fear right now.
- **Eat healthy foods to support your immune system.** The healthiest food includes whole grains, lean proteins, vegetables, and fruits. Make half of your plate fruits and vegetables – focus on whole fruits and vary your veggies. Make half your grains whole grains. Use low-fat or fat-free milk or yogurt. Vary your protein routine. Drink and eat less sales, saturated fats, trans fats, and added sugars. For additional information or recipes, visit www.choosemyplate.gov. **If you need help getting food during this time**, visit www.hungerfreecolorado.org/covid-19/ or call the Food Resource Hotline (855-855-4626).
- **Exercise, but be careful about exposure.** [Regular physical activity](#) benefits both the body and mind. It can reduce high blood pressure, help manage weight and reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and various cancers. It improves bone and muscle strength and increases balance, flexibility and fitness. Regular physical activity also decreases stress and anxiety, improves mental health and can reduce the risk of depression, cognitive decline and delay the onset of dementia. Exercise improves overall feelings of well-being. Find creative ways to exercise while maintaining social distancing and proper hygiene measures.
 - For outdoor activities:
 - Do not exercise if you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing.
 - If you go for a walk or bike ride, or go to a park or a public space, practice physical distancing, wear a face mask, and wash your hands with water and soap before you leave and as soon as you get home. Follow directions on restrictions of the number of people with you and/or restrictions on the use of public outdoor play or exercise equipment.
 - Staying active in and around the home:
 - Take short 3-5 minute breaks every 20-30 minutes to avoid too much sitting. Find ideas for healthy stretches [here](#).
 - Set up a routine to be active every day by planning a physical activity or exercise break, by joining an online class, or by setting a time to be active online with your friends or colleagues.
 - Plan time with your family and children for active games at home, walks in the parks, or cycling.

Who is impacted by COVID-19?

The risk of COVID-19 is not connected with race, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, or gender. Viruses do not discriminate. However, data show that COVID-19 is impacting lower-income communities, and in particular, communities of color, more than others.

These communities have experienced racism, economic hardship and ongoing stress for generations. As a result, these communities often have higher rates of chronic diseases. Even now, those working in lower paying jobs often have less flexibility to stay home or to socially/physically distance. These communities may not have sick leave or other benefits and may need to keep working to afford necessities including food and rent. The State remains committed to decreasing health inequities across Colorado.

Additional Resources:

For additional resources on accessing emergency services, here are some places to start:

- [visit 211's site](#)
- [AARP Colorado](#)
- Visit [Volunteers of America](#)