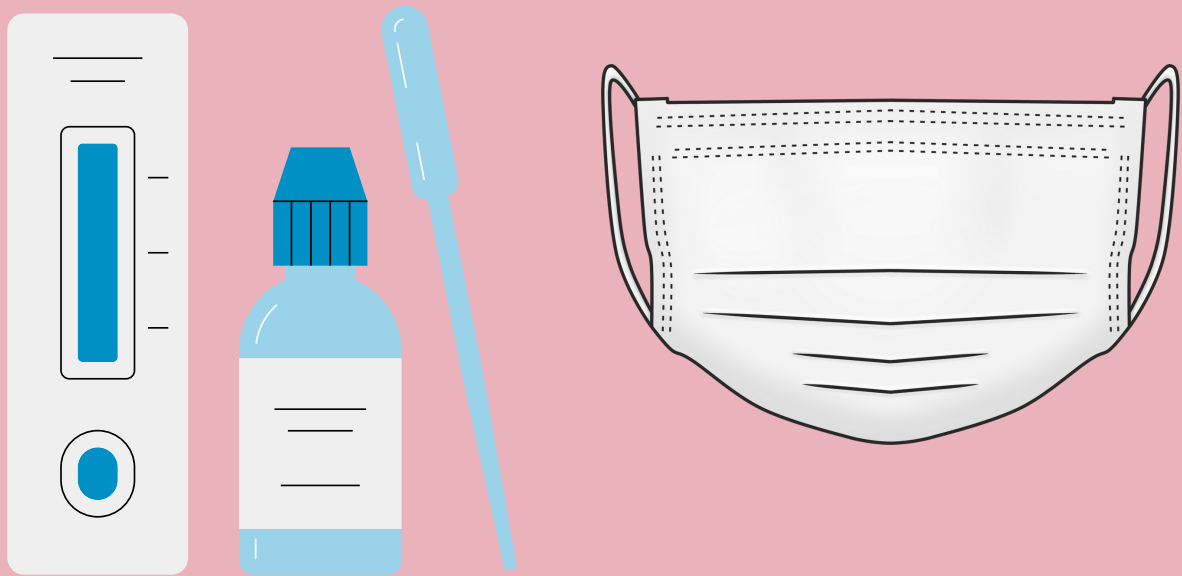


# COVID Resources for Vermonters with Disabilities



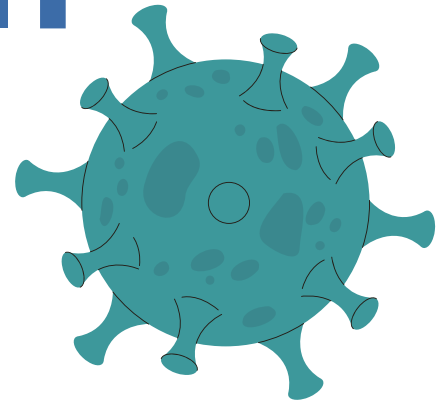
The information  
contained in this  
booklet should not  
be considered  
medical advice.

Always contact your  
doctor about any  
new or worsening  
symptoms or for any  
questions about  
your healthcare.



This booklet was published by  
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August 2022.

# WHAT IS COVID? HOW DOES IT SPREAD?



COVID is caused by the virus SARS-Cov-2.

The COVID virus spreads through droplets. When an infected person breathes out, droplets enter the air. If you breathe in these droplets, you can become sick too. The droplets also spread through coughing and sneezing. These droplets can land in the eyes, nose, and mouth of other people without even knowing it. When you spend time with someone who is sick, this is called exposure.

The COVID virus is constantly changing and mutating. Each new mutation is called a variant. Scientists are monitoring these variants to help us stay informed about their impact. For example, the Omicron variant spreads the virus even more quickly. It is even more important to stay safe if there are large numbers of people sick with Omicron in your area.

# COVID SYMPTOMS:

COVID causes a wide range of symptoms. Symptoms can start between 2 days to 2 weeks after you are exposed.

People who have the following symptoms, may have COVID:

- Fever or chills
- Runny nose or congestion
- Headaches
- Shortness of breath and difficulty breathing
- Fatigue or feeling overly tired
- Muscle or body aches
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea



If you have any of the above symptoms, you should stay home and take a COVID test immediately.

You should seek emergency medical attention if you have trouble breathing, persistent or sharp pain in your chest, new confusion, or pale or gray colored skin.

# TIPS FOR STAYING SAFE

1

Use hand sanitizer and wash your hands a lot.



2

Wear a mask over your nose and mouth in public spaces

3

Get your vaccine and booster shots to give your body immunity.



4

If you feel sick, stay home. Take a COVID test as soon as you can.

# WHO CAN GET COVID?

COVID can cause anyone to get sick. Some people are more vulnerable to the virus, which means they are more likely to get sick. They might get even sicker or have worse symptoms.

The following groups of people are especially vulnerable to COVID. They need our help to stay safe and healthy:

- People who are pregnant.
- Young children and babies.
- Older people, aged 65 and above.
- People with certain medical conditions, like asthma, cancer, chronic diseases, diabetes, and more.
- People with disabilities, especially those who depend on caregivers.
- People with mental health conditions.
- People who smoke.
- People who have compromised immune systems. Their bodies have a tough time fighting infections.
- People who are part of minority groups are at a higher risk, due to difficulty accessing resources.



# WHAT IS A COVID TEST? WHY SHOULD I TEST?

There are a few types of COVID tests. If you feel sick, you should take a viral test. A viral test will tell you if you have an infection at the time of testing. There are two types of viral tests: a rapid test and a laboratory test.

A rapid test takes about 15 minutes and can be done at home. We have instructions for testing yourself at home on the next page.

A laboratory test takes longer to complete. You usually have to go to another location to get tested.



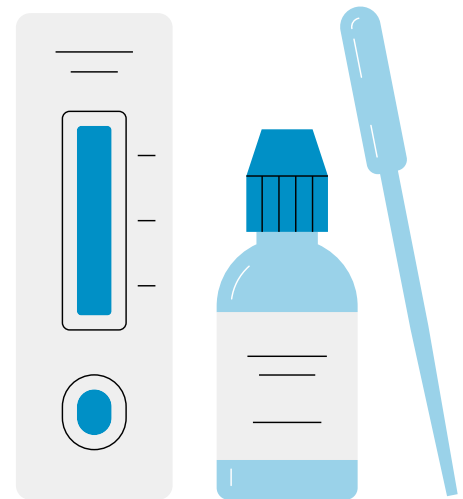
You should take a test if:

- You feel sick with COVID symptoms.
- You have a fever.
- You have recently been around someone who has COVID.
- You have recently been around a large crowd of people.
- You are planning to see someone who is medically vulnerable and you don't want to get them sick.

# HOW DO I TAKE A RAPID SELF TEST?

A rapid test usually comes in a small box with the following items:

- instructions for the test
- sealed nose swab
- test tube or a dropper with testing liquid
- test strip



You will also need tissues, a timer, and a safe place to throw the test materials away afterward.

Before you take a self test, you should wash your hands thoroughly. Read through the instructions carefully, because each test might be a little different.

Tips for testing:

- The nose swab can be uncomfortable. Try taking some deep breathes before you begin.
- You usually need to swab inside of your nostril for about 15-30 seconds each.
- You might sneeze when you test, this is normal.
- Set a timer to check the test results. A test usually takes about 15 minutes.



# ANTIBODY TESTING:

Viral tests are good for telling you if you are currently infected with COVID. Antibody testing is usually done to see if you have had COVID in the past, and now have immunity from the virus.

The antibody test is typically done through a mouth swab or a quick blood draw. The sample is examined to see if you have antibodies against COVID. Antibodies are the proteins in your body that fight disease. If you have COVID antibodies, then you are likely to have more immunity from the virus. Immunity does not mean you cannot get sick from COVID, but that your body is in a better position to fight the virus.

There are two approved antibody tests: the PCR test and the antigen test. The PCR test and the antigen tests should be done two to three weeks after you had COVID symptoms. Timing is important with these tests.

Testing too soon might give you incorrect results.

If you are interested in an antigen test, reach out to your doctor.



# TESTING RESOURCES:

- You can order FREE at-home COVID tests from [www.covid.gov/tests](https://www.covid.gov/tests). They will be mailed to your house. You can call 1-800-232-0233 for assistance with ordering.
- In Vermont, as of June 25, 2022, all Department of Health testing sites have closed. You may still be able to get tested at a pharmacy or through your healthcare provider. You can check out <https://www.healthvermont.gov/covid-19/testing/where-get-tested> for more information.
- Many pharmacies and grocery stores have COVID tests for sale.



If you have health insurance, some or all of your COVID tests may be covered. Contact your insurer for more information.

# WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID?

If you tested positive for COVID, regardless of whether you have symptoms, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends the following:

- Stay home for at least 5 days and isolate from others in your home
- Wear a well-fitting mask if you have to be around other people in your household
- Do not travel
- Take safety precautions through day 10

If you had symptoms, you can end isolation after 5 days, once you are fever-free for 24 hours.

If you did not have symptoms, you can end isolation 5 days after your positive test.

If you became very sick from COVID or were especially vulnerable, you should isolate for at least 10 days. Contact your doctor with worsening symptoms and to confirm the end of your isolation.

# QUARANTINING VS. ISOLATING

Quarantining is used when you have been in close contact with someone who has COVID. People who are not vaccinated for COVID should:

- Stay away from other people for at least 5 days.
- For 10 days after the close contact, watch for COVID symptoms. Wear a mask during this time.
- If you develop COVID symptoms, take a test and isolate.
- Avoid people who are at high risk for COVID.

If you have been vaccinated for COVID, monitor yourself for symptoms. Quarantining is not necessary, but it is a good idea. Take a COVID test if possible.

Isolating is used when you have tested positive for COVID, to separate you from people without COVID. During isolation you should:

- Monitor your symptoms. If you become significantly worse, reach out to your doctor or seek emergency medical care.
- Stay in a separate room from other members of your household, if possible.
- Do not share personal items, like cups, towels, or utensils.
- Wear a mask around other people.

# WHAT IS A CLOSE CONTACT?

People can be contagious with COVID for 2 days before they developed symptoms. If you have recently tested positive for COVID, you should notify anyone who is a close contact.

If you have recently spent time with someone who tested positive for COVID afterwards, you might be a close contact for them.

When figuring out if someone is a close contact, ask yourself:

- Was I within 6 feet of them?
- Did we spend more than 15 minutes together over a 24 hour period of time?

If the answer to both of these questions are yes, then this person is considered a close contact, even if they were wearing a mask.

If the answer to either of those questions is no, then the person is not a close contact.

# HAND WASHING IS THE BEST WAY TO STAY SAFE!

1

**Get your hands wet with warm water.**



2

**Rub your hands together with soap. Scrub in between your fingers and under your nails.**

3

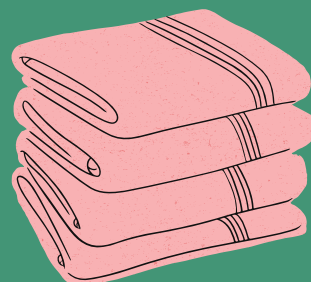
**Scrub your hands for at least 30 seconds. Try humming "Happy Birthday"**

4

**Rinse your hands well with warm water.**

5

**Dry your hands with a clean towel.**



# COVID TREATMENT OPTIONS:

COVID treatment is available for people who have tested positive and are at a high risk of becoming seriously ill. COVID treatments must be prescribed by your medical provider within a few days of your positive test.

If you are over the age of 50, unvaccinated, and/or are immunocompromised, reach out to your doctor immediately after testing positive for COVID. Your doctor will determine whether treatment is a good fit.

The Food and Drug Administration has approved several types of COVID treatment. These include antiviral treatments or monoclonal antibodies.

Treatments are available in Vermont, but must be prescribed by your physician. Please call your physician immediately if you are interested in treatment. COVID treatment can reduce the likelihood of hospitalization and possibly the severity of the virus.



# COVID VACCINES:

Vaccines are very important to keeping us all safe and healthy. Most people have gotten a vaccine at some point in their life for diseases like the flu, tetanus, or chickenpox.

Vaccines prepare your immune system to fight off a disease. Vaccines work by introducing your body to a small amount of a disease. Your body practices fighting the disease off. This way, if you become infected with the disease in the future, your body knows how to respond.



Vaccines have been around for over 200 years. Vaccines are an effective way of providing your body with additional protections from viruses you may get. Vaccines can possibly lessen how sick you get. The more people in a community who are vaccinated, the less likely it is for a virus to keep spreading. Vaccines help keep the most vulnerable people in a community safe.

Vaccines have now been approved by the Food and Drug Administration for everyone aged 6 months and older.



# COMMON VACCINE QUESTIONS:

Can I still get COVID even if I was vaccinated?

Yes, people who are vaccinated may still get COVID. However, people who are vaccinated who get COVID tend to have much lower rates of serious illness and hospitalization and death. No vaccine is 100% effective, which is why it is still possible to get COVID if vaccinated.

Can I get vaccinated if I am pregnant?

Yes, people who are pregnant are eligible for the COVID vaccines. Research has shown that getting a COVID vaccine while pregnant reduces hospitalization and illness rates for babies under the age of 6 months.

Are the COVID vaccines safe? How do we know?

Yes, the COVID vaccines are safe. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) is constantly monitoring the effectiveness of the vaccines. The CDC website has up-to-date information on the safety and effectiveness of vaccines. You can read online at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/effectiveness/how-they-work.html>.

# OTHER COMMON QUESTIONS:



## Does the vaccine hurt?

Most people don't like getting shots because they tend to be uncomfortable. If you have had severe reactions to shots in the past, please speak to your provider prior to the vaccine. You may have some soreness in your arm after the shot, but the process should not be too painful. Redness or minor pain at the shot site is normal.

## Are there side effects to the vaccines?

Side effects are a normal sign that your body is building protection to the virus, by learning how to fight the infection. The majority of people who receive COVID vaccines do not experience side effects. For those who do, side effects tend to be minimal. Side effects might include fatigue, headaches, muscle pain, or nausea. Importantly, any side effects from the vaccine are much less significant than actually becoming ill with COVID.

If you feel like you are having extreme side effects after receiving the vaccine, seek medical care immediately.

# WHAT IS A COVID BOOSTER?



COVID vaccines are the first step in staying safe from COVID 19. In order to make sure the vaccines are as effective as they can be, you should get booster shots as you become eligible.

Booster shots refer to the extra doses of vaccination, after the initial round of COVID vaccines. COVID vaccines aren't the only vaccines with boosters. For example, Tetanus shots also require boosters, typically on a ten-year basis.

A COVID booster shot enhances and restores the protection of the vaccine. A booster shot is a reminder for your body of how to fight disease. The initial vaccine taught your body how to fight COVID, and the booster shot helps to improve this.

If you are unsure about eligibility for a booster shot, you can use the Center for Disease Control's online tool. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/booster-shot.html>.

Most pharmacies offer booster doses and are available through walk-ins or by appointment.

# VERMONT VACCINE AND BOOSTER RESOURCES:

You can get free vaccines at your doctor's office, your pharmacy, or at walk-in clinics in your area.

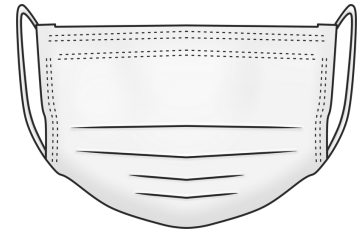
Vermonters who are homebound can receive their vaccines and boosters in their home. You can request an appointment by calling 802-863-7200.

If you require extra assistance with the vaccination process, you can call the Vermont Health Department at 802-863-7200 or toll-free 800-464-4343.



Text your zip code to 438829 to find vaccines near you. You can also call 1-800-232-0233 to find vaccines in your area.

# WHY SHOULD I WEAR A MASK?



Because the COVID virus spreads through droplets in the air, one of the best ways to keep yourself safe is by wearing a mask. Masks help you to inhale less germs that could cause you to become sick. If you are already sick, wearing a mask prevents you from spreading illnesses to other people.

There are a lot of types of masks. A good mask should cover your nose and mouth. The mask should fit your face tightly and comfortably. You should be able to breathe without issue when wearing.

A disposable mask should only be worn once, before you throw it away.

Reusable masks are meant to be worn many times, but they must be washed thoroughly to keep being effective. You can wash masks with your other laundry, or you can wash by hand. To wash your reusable mask by hand, use soap and hot water. Hang the mask up to completely dry.



# WHAT IS SOCIAL DISTANCING?

COVID has been isolating for everyone. Now that some of the Center for Disease Control (CDC) restrictions on social gatherings have been lifted, it is tempting to assume we can go back to normal life. However, COVID rates are high in the United States. Therefore, it is still important to stay safe.

Social distancing is a tool to keep infection rates down. Social distancing refers to keeping a safe amount of distance between you and someone else. The recommended distance is about 6 feet away. For example, if you are in line at the grocery store, try to keep about the distance of a shopping cart away from other people in the store.

Choosing to eat outside at a restaurant, or avoiding busy, crowded places is also social distancing. Try to meet up with friends outdoors, or spend time in well-ventilated spaces with windows open. Wearing a mask in crowded spaces can help you to stay safe if social distancing is not an option.

# WHERE CAN I GO FOR MORE INFORMATION?

The Vermont Department of Health has resources available over the phone 833-722-0860 or online at <https://www.healthvermont.gov/covid-19>.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has many resources, including videos on COVID. The CDC also tracks infection rates and vaccination rates by state. You can find more information at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html> or by calling 1-800-232-0233.

The Department of Vermont Health Access has updated information available regarding vaccines, insurance, and traveling requirements. You can look at <https://dvha.vermont.gov/covid-19> for more information or call 802-879-5900.

Vermont Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health has resource guides and lists specifically tailored to families. You can access online at <https://www.vffcmh.org/coordinated-services/covid-19-resources/> or call 800-639-6071.

COVID Support Vermont is a member of the Vermont Care Partners. The organization helps people cope with the pandemic through community services that promote resilience, empowerment and recovery. Their website is <https://covidsupportvt.org/> or you can call them at 802.223.1773.

Vermont Legal Aid provides legal information on how evictions, benefits, healthcare, and more have been impacted by the COVID crisis. Reach out to them online at <https://vtlawhelp.org/coronavirus-updates> or by phone at 1-800-889-2047.

The Vermont Family Network is a great resource for families with children who have disabilities. You can call them at 802) 876-5315 or find them online at <https://www.vermontfamilynetwork.org/>.



The Vermont Network aims to end violence in Vermont, especially for families impacted by COVID. Their website has resources for victims of violence at <https://www.vtnetwork.org/covid-19-resources/> or by phone (802) 223-1302.

Disability Information and Access Line provides help with COVID-19 vaccinations and testing for people with disabilities. Call 888-677-1199 or email [DIAL@usaginganddisability.org](mailto:DIAL@usaginganddisability.org). Their website is <https://acl.gov/DIAL>.

USPS is distributing free rapid antigen COVID-19 at-home tests, including more accessible tests. If you are a person who is blind or low vision, you can place 2 orders for free, more accessible at-home tests from USPS.com (while supplies last).

Each order now includes 12 rapid antigen COVID-19 tests that are more accessible for people who are blind or low vision.

Order online at <https://special.usps.com/testkits/accessible>.



Thank you to the Center for Disease Control and the Vermont Department of Health for providing information and resources.

Disability Rights Vermont:

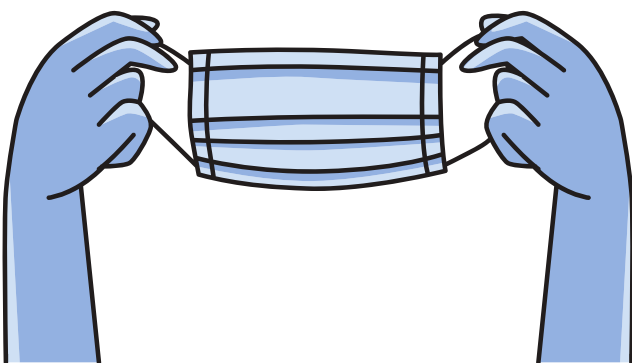
141 Main Street, Suite 7  
Montpelier, VT 05602

Toll free: 1-800-834-7890

<https://disabilityrightsvt.org/>



Vermont's Protection and  
Advocacy Organization



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