

Take Extra Precautions as COVID-19 Infections Rise



COVID-19 infections continue to rise, due in part to the coming of winter weather, as well as to the appearance of more infectious strains of the virus. In addition to wearing a mask, practicing social distancing, and keeping hands sanitized, there are extra precautions a person should take to decrease the risk of infection. These include:

Limit time with and exposure to others.

The more time that a person spends in close contact with a person who is infected, the greater their chance of becoming infected – and this is especially true with the newer, more infectious strains of COVID-19. Taking steps to limit the amount of time a person is exposed to others outside their household can help. For example:

- Avoid getting together indoors with people with whom you don't live.
- If you do the shopping for your family, try to reduce the number of trips and the length of time of each trip. One way to help with this is to make a list of exactly what is needed at the store. Another is to go to stores you know well so you spend less time trying to figure out where certain items are kept.

- Consider curbside pick-up options when getting take-out food from a restaurant.
- When possible, if using public transportation, travel during “off-peak” hours when crowds are smaller.

Wear gloves when shopping.

Use disposable gloves when shopping – and dispose of them when finished.

“Double up” on masks.

If wearing a mask does not cause difficulty breathing, consider adding a second mask when going to areas where there are likely to be a lot of other people. Adding a disposable mask underneath a cloth mask may be an option for many.

Be sure the mask is worn correctly and fits well.

To be most effective, a mask needs to cover both the mouth and nose. It should also fit snugly enough that there are not gaps.

Keep taking precautions even after vaccinated.

The vaccines will work slightly differently in each person, but in general it appears that full immunity is likely not to occur until several days – perhaps as long as two weeks – after a person receives the second dose of the current vaccines. Maintaining appropriate precautions after receiving the vaccine is therefore quite important. Even after immunity is achieved, individuals should continue to take precautions. Why? Because it is thought that a person who has been vaccinated may still be able to unknowingly “carry” the virus and pass it on to others.

Keep your immune system healthy.

The stronger a person’s immune system, the better positioned they are to fight COVID-19 infection. Eating healthily, exercising appropriately, getting sufficient sleep, reducing stress, not smoking, and limiting alcohol intake are all steps a person can take to strengthen their immune system.