

COVID-19 and African American* Communities

Recent Updates:

10/28/20: Updates regarding spread, risk reduction, and resources for coping with stress.



Some say when America catches a cold, the African American community gets pneumonia. African Americans, and other communities of color, appear to be at greater risk of serious illness and death from COVID-19 due to a history of racism that creates differences in health and access to care and other resources needed for good health. By working together, we can improve our outcomes. Here's what you need to know.

1. What is a coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Many of them infect animals, but some coronaviruses from animals can evolve (change) into a new coronavirus that infects humans and can spread from person-to-person. This is what happened with the new coronavirus known as SARS-CoV-2, which causes the disease known as COVID-19.

COVID-19 typically causes mild to moderate illness, like the common cold, but sometimes progresses to cause severe disease and even death. There is currently no vaccine or cure available for COVID-19.

Everyone is at risk of getting COVID-19, regardless of their race or ethnicity. Human coronaviruses most commonly spread to others from an infected person through:

- Droplets produced through coughing, sneezing, talking and singing
- Close personal contact, such as caring for an infected person

COVID-19 may also spread by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching the mouth, nose, or eyes but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. Some people get COVID-19 without ever showing symptoms but they can still spread the infection to others.

2. Why is COVID-19 more deadly for African Americans compared to the rest of the population?

COVID-19 is highlighting a history of racism and unequal access to healthy environments, opportunities, and resources needed for good health in communities of color. Living under such conditions can make it harder to prevent and control chronic conditions, like high blood pressure, asthma, heart disease, and diabetes. People with these underlying health conditions or those with cancer and uncontrolled HIV are at greater risk of serious illness and death if they get COVID-19.

Key Points

- Novel coronavirus can be spread through close contact with an infected person when they cough, sneeze talk or sing.
- African Americans are at greater risk of complications and death due to social and economic injustices that create differences in access to care and other resources.
- Avoid the **3 C's: Confined spaces, Crowds, and Close contact** with others
- Public Health is taking steps to prevent the spread of coronavirus in LA County.

For more information:

Los Angeles County
Department of Public Health

<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/>

Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/novel-coronavirus-2019.html

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Smoking, vaping, obesity, and underlying health conditions are also associated with worse health outcomes with COVID-19. Unfortunately, we are seeing some groups of people, like African Americans, becoming very sick and dying at a greater rate than other groups.

3. What can I do to protect myself and my community from COVID-19?

The Department of Public Health is actively working with community partners to remove the avoidable and unjust impact of COVID-19 on African Americans and other overly impacted communities. Some issues have taken hold over many generations and will take time to correct. However, here's what you and others can do right now to protect yourself and your community from COVID-19:

- When you go out for essential activities, like going to the grocery store, seeking medical care, or going to work, avoid the **3 C's**: **Confined** spaces, **Crowds**, and **Close** contact with others.
- Practice physical distancing – stay at least 6 feet away from others when you are out.
- Wear cloth face coverings when you are around others unless you have been told by a medical provider not to use one.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds frequently throughout the day.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. If you are caring for someone sick with COVID-19 at home, follow posted public health guidance for [caring for someone](#) at home.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning product.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with tissue; if a tissue is unavailable, use your elbow, not your hands.
- If you chose to gather with others be sure to limit the gathering to no more than 3 or fewer households, everyone should wear face coverings, stay outdoors and limit the gathering to 2 hours or less. Follow all the other rules in the posted guidance for [small private gatherings](#).
- Participating in indoor activities with others can increase your risk of exposure to COVID-19, especially in spaces with poor ventilation. This is why it is safer to be outside.

When we do these things together, we can keep our community safe.

4. What should I do if I have symptoms of COVID-19?

Most people will have mild symptoms and should stay home at least 24 hours after fever has resolved (without the use of medicine that reduces fevers) AND after symptoms have improved, AND at least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared. Visit ph.lacounty.gov/covidisolation for information on how to take care of yourself if you are sick with COVID-19 symptoms.

Older adults and those with underlying medical problems symptoms should talk with their health care provider early if they have symptoms. If you are ill, you may need to advocate for yourself by directly requesting that you get tested for COVID-19, especially if you have a chronic disease, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, lung, kidney or heart disease, or HIV.

If you are having difficulty breathing, feel pain or pressure in your chest, have bluish lips or face or are experiencing a new onset of confusion or difficulty waking up, or other serious symptoms, go to an emergency room or call 911.

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5. Where do I get tested for COVID-19?

It's best to get tested through a healthcare provider, so that you immediately get the care you need, whether you test positive or not. There are also free mobile testing sites for people with symptoms throughout the County. Call 2-1-1 or visit <https://covid19.lacounty.gov/testing> for more information. If you need help finding a doctor, the 24/7 LA County information line can help - call 2-1-1 or visit the [211 website](#).

6. What is Public Health doing to address the impact on the African American community?

We are working to decrease some of the barriers that make it difficult to stay healthy against COVID-19. For example, we continue to work with partners to:

- Increase the number of testing sites to make sure they're closer to communities that may need it most.
- Make sure medical care and support are available to those affected by COVID-19.
- Spread the word about COVID-19 and its unjust burden on African Americans.

7. I've heard lots of rumors about where COVID-19 came from and how it's cured. How do I know what's true?

There have been many rumors about COVID-19 that are false. For example, there was a rumor that 5G radio waves cause COVID-19, but radio waves cannot create a virus and the disease has spread in some areas that do not currently have 5G service. The Department's Health Care Consumer Protection has information and resource on how to avoid COVID-19 health care scams. Visit: ph.lacounty.gov/hccp/covidscams/.

During times of crises, it is normal to try to make sense of things that are happening. It's a way to gain control over a situation that is disrupting our daily lives. Also, for individuals and communities who have historically experienced injustices from government institutions, there may be a reluctance to trust information from or resources provided by those institutions during an emergency, and many may choose to ignore them completely. Before taking any action, always confirm the information is accurate. Remember to check the source, author, and accuracy of the content of any information you receive and before you decide to share it with others. Some reliable sources of information are noted in the box below.

8. What can I do if I get stressed about COVID-19?

When you hear, read, or watch news about COVID-19, it is normal to feel anxious and overwhelmed. It is important to care for your mental as well as your physical health. The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health's [COVID-19 webpage](#) and the 211LA webpage 211la.org/resources/subcategory/mental-health provide local resources to address mental health & wellbeing needs and concerns. Guidance and resources are also available on the CDC webpage, [Coping with Stress](#).

If you want to speak with someone about your mental health, contact your doctor or the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health Access Center 24/7 Helpline at 1-800-854-7771.

To talk to someone, call the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health Access Center 24/7 Helpline at (800) 854-7771 or call 2-1-1.

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Want to learn more about COVID-19?

For information about current cases and other resources, visit:

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health

<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/>

This website contains the guidance documents below as well as many others.

[COVID FAQ](#)

[Learn About Symptoms & What to do if You Are Sick](#)

[Social Distancing](#)

[Cloth Face Covering](#)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/novel-coronavirus-2019.html>

California Department of Public Health

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/nCOV2019.aspx>

World Health Organization

<https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>

For information about health equity, visit:

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Center for Health Equity

<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/CenterForHealthEquity/>

*The US Census defines **Black or African American** as a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.

