

**Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19):
Best Practices for Businesses, Community Establishments
and Public Events**

This guidance describes best practices that businesses, community establishments, and event organizers are recommended to follow to help reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission amongst workers, patrons¹ and the community.

This guidance is not intended for use in healthcare settings, Pre-Kindergarten-12th Grade and Adult Education, or childcare settings. It is also not intended for non-healthcare congregate settings such as correctional facilities or homeless shelters. For guidance specific to these settings, visit coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance.

Definitions:

Close contact: Someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period, starting from 2 days before illness onset (or for asymptomatic infected people, 2 days prior to positive test collection).

COVID-19 community levels- a tool created by the CDC to help communities and individuals decide what prevention steps to take based on the COVID-19 level in their area. There are 3 levels: **LOW**, **MEDIUM**, and **HIGH**. When COVID-19 community levels are **LOW**, the risk of catching and spreading COVID-19 is lower for everyone. To look up current COVID-19 community levels for DC and other areas of the U.S., see cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html.

Infectious period: The time-period during which someone is infectious, or able to spread their infection to others. The infectious period for COVID-19 starts two days before symptom onset and typically ends 10 days after symptom onset (or test date for people who do not have symptoms).

Up to date on COVID-19 vaccine: A person is considered up to date after they have received all recommended doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, including booster doses as applicable.

- This includes:
 - Unboosted people 12 and older who completed their primary vaccine series:
 - Less than 5 months ago (for the mRNA vaccines: Pfizer or Moderna)
 - Less than 2 months ago (for the J&J vaccine)
 - Children age 5 to 11 who have completed a primary vaccine series but are not yet eligible for a booster dose
- For detailed information about staying up to date on your COVID-19 vaccine, see cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html.

How COVID-19 spreads:

- The main way COVID-19 spreads is from person-to-person when an infected person breathes out droplets and particles that contain the virus.
 - People can become sick with COVID-19 by:
 - breathing in infected air,

¹ The generic term “patron” is used throughout this guidance for simplicity. Please substitute whatever term is appropriate for the people served by your establishment (e.g., customer, client, visitor, attendee, guest, congregant).

- being splashed or sprayed in their eyes, nose, or mouth with infectious droplets (e.g., from a cough)
- touching their eyes, nose or mouths with hands that have the virus on them.
- People who are 6 feet or closer to an infected person are most likely to get sick.
- COVID-19 can also spread from environmental surfaces, but this is uncommon.

Core elements of COVID-19 prevention:

Vaccination:

- Vaccination is the most important public health intervention for ending the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 vaccines are free, safe, and effective.
- High levels of vaccination at a business/community establishment will help allow the establishment to continue functioning, even if there is a COVID-19 exposure.
- **The provision in DC Mayor's Order 2021-048 which required certain businesses to check vaccination status of patrons prior to entry expired effective February 14, 2022, HOWEVER:**
 - **Any DC business or community establishment may elect to require their staff to be vaccinated against COVID-19 and may require proof of vaccination from patrons to enter the facility.**
- DC Government employees, contractors, interns, and grantees are still required to be vaccinated against COVID-19 and to receive a booster shot (unless they have received a religious or medical exemption). For more information, see Mayor's Order 2022-029 at coronavirus.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/coronavirus.
- Employers who do not have a policy requiring their workers to be vaccinated against COVID-19, should actively encourage and consider incentivizing workers to get vaccinated and to stay up to date on their COVID-19 vaccine.
- Employers should support staff by providing leave options for them to get the COVID-19 vaccine and for if they experience vaccine side effects.
- DC Health and the Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) have a Vaccine Exchange Program that connects District organizations with vaccine providers that can assist with setting up COVID-19 vaccination clinics for employees in the workplace or at designated vaccination clinics.
 - Business and community organizations are eligible to participate in the Vaccine Exchange Program. Organizations interested in setting up a vaccine clinic should submit a request at request vaccineexchange.dc.gov/.

Actively encourage staff to stay home if they are sick

- Staff with symptoms of COVID-19 should be strongly encouraged to get tested and to consult with their healthcare provider as needed.
 - Information on options for COVID-19 testing in the District of Columbia is available at coronavirus.dc.gov/testing.
- If a worker or patron develops any symptoms of COVID-19 while at the facility or event, businesses, community establishments, and event organizers should have a plan in place for that individual to immediately isolate, notify their supervisor (if the individual is an employee), and leave the premises.
- Leave policies should be flexible and non-punitive, and should account for the following:
 - Employees who report COVID-19 symptoms
 - Employees who are isolating due to testing positive for COVID-19
 - Employees who have been tested for COVID-19 (for reasons including symptoms, travel, or exposure) and are awaiting test results
 - Employees who need to quarantine due to close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19
 - Employees who need to stay home with their children if there are school or

- childcare closures, or to care for sick family members
 - Employees who need to get a COVID-19 vaccine,
 - Employees who are experiencing side effects from the COVID-19 vaccine.
- Learn about and inform your employees about COVID-related leave provided through new federal law, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) and all applicable District law relating to sick leave.

Masks

- **The provision in DC Mayor's Order 2021-048 which imposed an indoor mask mandate for indoor public settings expired effective March 1, 2022.**
- The indoor mask mandate (regardless of vaccination status or personal history of COVID-19) remains in effect in certain settings covered by this guidance including:
 - DC government offices where there is direct interaction between employees and members of the public
 - DC public libraries
 - Public transit, taxis and ride share vehicles (applies to both passengers and operators)
- **Business, community, and event organizers may choose to maintain stricter indoor masking policies for patrons and employees.**
- For all indoor public settings without an indoor mask mandate:
 - Most people do not need to wear a mask in indoor public settings unless COVID-19 community levels are **HIGH** (see page 1).
 - If COVID-19 community levels are **MEDIUM** or **HIGH**, people who are immunocompromised² or at high risk for severe COVID-19³ are recommended to wear a mask or respirator in indoor public settings.
- It is not necessary to wear masks outdoors.
- Masks should not be worn by children younger than age 2.
- Note that at any COVID-19 community level (even **LOW**) a person may choose to wear a mask or respirator based on personal preference and assessment of their own personal risk. Employers may not prohibit their employees from wearing masks (except when an employee is actively using equipment that precludes wearing a mask, or when wearing a mask would endanger public safety or is otherwise banned by law).
- For more information about masks, please refer to *Mask and Respirator Guidance* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance.

Ventilation

- Keep indoor spaces well ventilated. Bring in fresh air by opening windows or doors as much as possible.
- For more information about building ventilation, see the CDC article *Ventilation in Buildings* at cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/ventilation.html.

Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette

² **Immunocompromised:** someone who has a weakened immune system due to a medical condition or from taking medications that suppress the immune system. This includes but is not limited to: people on chemotherapy, people with blood cancers like leukemia, people who have had an organ transplants or stem cell transplant, and people on dialysis.

³ For more information, see *Guidance for People at Higher Risk for Severe COVID-19* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance

- Encourage workers to perform frequent hand hygiene (with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol), including: before and after work shifts/breaks, before and after patron interactions, after using the restroom, before and after putting on, touching, or removing a mask, before eating, after blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- Consider using signs to remind workers and patrons to practice respiratory etiquette: to cover their mouth and nose with a tissue if they cough or sneeze (or sneeze into their elbow if no tissue is available), and to place used tissues into the trash.
- Businesses, community establishments, and event organizers should provide supplies (for use by workers and patrons) to allow for hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.

Physical distancing

- Physical distancing means maintaining 6 feet distance or more between yourself and other people.
- People who are up to date on their COVID-19 vaccine do not need to practice routine physical distancing unless COVID-19 community levels are **HIGH** (see page 1).
- The following groups of people should maintain at least 6 feet of distance from other others in indoor and outdoor public spaces:
 - People who are unvaccinated (including children younger than 5 who are not yet eligible for the vaccine), partially vaccinated, or not up to date on their COVID-19 vaccine
 - Immunocompromised people (who may not be fully protected against COVID-19 even if they are up to date with their vaccine)
 - People who are at high risk for severe COVID-19

Cleaning and disinfection

- For comprehensive guidance on cleaning and disinfection, including if someone with COVID-19 was or is at the establishment, see [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html).

Responding to COVID-19 in the workplace

- Establish a plan in the event a worker or patron is diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Encourage workers to report a diagnosis of COVID-19 to the establishment as soon as possible.
- Identify a point of contact at the establishment that a worker (or patron) can notify if they test positive for COVID-19 and choose to disclose this information.
- If a worker or patron chooses to report to the business, community establishment, or event organizer that they are positive for COVID-19, the establishment or designated point of contact should:
 - Refer the COVID-19 positive person to *Guidance for Isolation: People Who Test Positive for COVID-19 and their Household Members* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance.
 - Notify individuals who may have been exposed. facilities/establishments are responsible for notifying close contacts and providing quarantine guidance? **The notification must not identify the COVID-19 positive individual.** Provide them with:
 - Education about COVID-19, including the signs and symptoms of COVID-19
 - Referral to the *Guidance for Close Contacts of a Person Confirmed to have COVID-19: Quarantine and Testing*, available at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance.
 - Information on options for COVID-19 testing in the District of Columbia is available at coronavirus.dc.gov/testing.

- If the COVID-19 positive person was not at the facility during their infectious period (see page 1), the risk of exposure is minimal, and no further steps are necessary other than continuing routine precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- **Return to work:** For information about **duration** of quarantine and isolation, please see *Guidance for Close Contacts of a Person Confirmed to have COVID-19: Quarantine and Testing* and *Guidance for Isolation: People Who Test Positive for COVID-19 and their Household Members* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance.

Reporting requirements:

- Cases must be reported to DC Health per the criteria below. Staff and patron information must be provided when available if requested to assist with contact tracing. Upon receipt of reports, DC Health will determine next steps.
 - For multipurpose event facilities (e.g., places of worship, hotels, convention centers, entertainment venues):
 - If ten or more persons (e.g., **workers, volunteers, attendees**) test positive for COVID-19 (not before results come back) within a 5-day period or at a given event.
 - For businesses, community establishments, and event organizers:
 - If ten or more **workers** test positive for COVID-19 (not before results come back) within a 5-day period.
- Notify DC Health by submitting an online form on the DC Health COVID-19 Reporting Requirements website dchealth.dc.gov/page/covid-19-reporting-requirements:
 - Submit a **Non-Healthcare Facility COVID-19 Consult Form**.

The guidelines above will continue to be updated as necessary. Please visit coronavirus.dc.gov for the most updated information.