

COVID-19

Information For People Living with HIV



The impact of COVID-19 on people with HIV is not known. Current evidence indicates that the risk of severe illness increases with age and with certain chronic medical problems. In one case series, the median age of critically ill patients was 66 years and 72% had underlying co-morbid conditions, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, chronic lung disease, and immunosuppression.

Although people with HIV who are on treatment with a normal CD4 T-cell count may not be at an increased risk of serious illness, many people with HIV have conditions that increase their risk:

- Older age – over half of people living with HIV in California are over 50 years of age;
- Chronic medical problems – cardiovascular and chronic lung disease are more common in people living with HIV; and
- Immune suppression – indicated by a low CD4 T-cell count or not receiving antiretroviral treatment.

How Can People with HIV Protect Themselves?

The basics for protecting yourself from COVID-19 are almost the same as for everyone:

- Washing hands with soap and water.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue or your elbow.
- Avoiding touching eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick.
- Staying away from work, school, and other people if you become sick.
- Continuing your HIV medications to keep your immune system as healthy as possible.
- Following [guidance from public health officials](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/ncov2019.aspx) on social distancing which can be found at: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/ncov2019.aspx>.

What Can You Do If You Are at Higher Risk for Illness From COVID-19?

In addition to general precautions to protect yourself, you should:

- Make sure that you have adequate supplies and refills for your antiretrovirals and other medications;
- Keep away from others who are sick, limit close contact and wash your hands often;
- Avoid crowds and large gatherings of people as much as possible;
- Avoid cruise ship travel and non-essential air travel;
- If there is a COVID-19 outbreak in your community, stay home as much as possible but maintain a social network remotely to help you stay socially connected and mentally healthy; and
- Establish a plan for clinical care, including use of telemedicine, if you have to stay at home.

[Further information](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html) for people at risk for serious illness from COVID-19 is available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>.

Additional Resources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

California Department of Public Health Website: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/ncov2019.aspx>