

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Preventing COVID-19 in People at Increased Risk of Severe Illness

This fact sheet is intended for people at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19. It will help you determine what you can do to decrease your risk of exposure to COVID-19.

Your risk from COVID-19 increases with:

- Age, as you get older the risk increases, especially in older adults;
- Having a chronic medical condition including obesity, diabetes, lung/heart/kidney/liver diseases, stroke, high blood pressure, and conditions that weaken the immune system (e.g., some cancers, untreated HIV/AIDS);
- Taking medications that weaken the immune system (e.g., chemotherapy, oral steroid medications).

Taking extra precautions

- Get fully vaccinated for COVID-19. A person is considered fully vaccinated 14 days after receiving their second dose of a two-dose vaccine series.
- Those at increased risk of severe illness need to closely follow recommended public health measures, even if fully vaccinated, including: physical distancing, wearing a mask, avoiding crowded indoor and poorly ventilated spaces, and hand washing.
- Choose less busy times to use public transportation or go shopping. Use delivery services or ask others to pick-up food and supplies for you. If you use taxis or rideshares; wear a mask, ask the driver to wear a mask, sit in the back seat, and open the window.
- Becoming ill with the flu may lead to additional complications if you also get COVID-19. Get your annual influenza (flu) vaccine when it's available as an extra precaution.
- For more information on how to protect yourself from COVID-19, please see Public Health Ontario's fact sheet: [How to Protect Yourself from COVID-19](#).

Socializing with family, friends, and others

- It is important to exercise caution when meeting with people who do not live with you. However, it is equally important that anyone who lives with you should also take all the same precautions to help prevent transmission of COVID-19 within your household.
- Consider waiting until you are fully vaccinated before coming into close contact with others. Ideally, connecting with others who are fully vaccinated will also lower your risk.
- Visit with friends and family outdoors whenever possible. If you must be indoors, open windows and doors to improve ventilation.
- When participating in social activities, continue to follow your local Public health guidance to limit the spread of COVID-19. This guidance will continue to evolve with Ontario's re-opening plan.
- Many people have experienced increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression as a result of COVID-19. If you or a loved one have mental health concerns, contact your primary care provider.

Resources

- Public Health Agency of Canada: [Vulnerable Populations and COVID-19](#)
- The Canadian Coalition for Seniors' Mental Health: [Tips for Battling Anxiety During this Public Health Situation](#)
- Ministry of Health: [Resources for Ontarians Experiencing Mental Health and Addictions Issues During the Pandemic](#)
- Canadian Cancer Society: [Cancer and COVID-19](#)
- About Kids Health: [Information for Parents of Immunocompromised Childrean and Children with Chronic Medical Conditions](#)
- Public Health Ontario: [Multilingual COVID-19 Resources](#)
- Ontario: [Reopening Ontario](#)

Learn about the virus

To learn more and access up-to-date information on COVID-19, visit the Ontario Ministry of Health's website: ontario.ca/coronavirus.

The information in this document is current as of August 5, 2021