Information about COVID-19

For newcomers to the United States

» Summary

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Stay safe when you travel to the U.S.

You can get healthcare in the United States.

COVID-19 is a serious illness

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COVID-19 is an illness caused by a virus that spreads through the air from person to person. More than 1 million people have died from COVID-19 in the United States, and many people still get sick every day. State and local governments may have different rules regarding COVID-19.

Your resettlement agency case worker can help you find your new community's rules on COVID-19 and information about how to keep yourself and your family safe.

You can get COVID-19 anytime, including while you travel. You can get COVID-19 and may not know it because you may not feel sick at all. This makes it more likely that you could spread it to other people including your family, friends, and community.

Thankfully, there are many ways to protect yourself and others.

⟫ You can protect yourself and others from COVID-19.

Wear a mask over your nose and mouth when away from home:

- Wearing a mask in indoor public places protects you and others from COVID-19.

- When you wear a mask, it is less likely that you will get sick from breathing in the virus if it is in the air.

- It is possible to be sick with COVID-19 and not know it, because not everyone feels sick. In this case, wearing a mask makes it less likely that you will spread the virus to others.

- Ask your local pharmacy if they have free masks available.

Masks must be worn properly to be effective:

- Wear your mask over your nose and mouth
- Make sure no air leaks out the top or sides
- Put your mask on and take it off with clean hands
- Do not touch your mask when it is on your face
- Clean your cloth or other reusable mask at least daily
- Use your disposable mask only once
- Replace wet or dirty masks right away with a clean dry mask
- Teach children ages 2 years and older to wear a mask
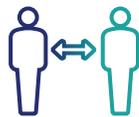
Increase space and distance
To avoid getting sick with COVID-19, you may want to avoid crowded places or keep distance between yourself and others.

Get fresh air
COVID-19 spreads between people more easily indoors than outdoors. Spend time outdoors, or bring fresh air indoors by opening windows and using fans.

Clean your hands frequently
Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If you can't wash your hands, using hand sanitizer is another good option.

Get your COVID-19 vaccines

» Get your COVID-19 vaccines for the most protection.

There are vaccines that can protect you from getting seriously ill or hospitalized with COVID-19. Vaccines are shots you get in your arm that teach your body how to fight against diseases such as COVID-19. COVID-19 vaccines are safe and available in the United States for adults, children and babies.

Vaccines are:

- **Safe:** The vaccines have been proven safe for people of different races, ethnicities, ages, and health conditions. It is much more likely that you will have serious complications from getting COVID-19 than from a vaccine. Vaccines are safe for people who are pregnant or breastfeeding.

- **Effective:** COVID-19 vaccines work very well. Most people who get seriously ill from COVID-19 are not up-to-date with their vaccines. Even if you do get sick, the vaccines still protect almost all vaccinated people from becoming seriously ill or dying.

Some people have side effects after their shot; it is normal to feel sick for 1-3 days. Side effects mean that your body is building protection against the virus. The benefits of the COVID-19 vaccination are much greater than any potential risk of side effects.

Stay up-to-date on your vaccines

Get your COVID-19 vaccines before resettlement

By getting both doses of a two-shot vaccine (such as Moderna, Pfizer or Novavax), or one dose of a one-shot vaccine (such as Johnson & Johnson), you can protect yourself and others around you from COVID-19 while you travel to the United States. Getting vaccinated will also help you avoid a delay in your travel and resettlement.
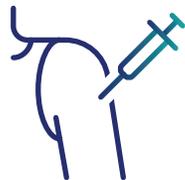
Stay protected from COVID-19 by getting boosters

It is important to stay up-to-date with your COVID-19 vaccines. If you are up-to-date with your vaccines, you are much less likely to get seriously ill, need hospitalization, or die from COVID-19. Being up-to-date means getting both doses of a two-shot vaccine, and then getting any recommended booster shots.

Boosters are shots you get after you are fully vaccinated so that you can stay protected against COVID-19. You should get a booster a few months after your second dose of a two-shot vaccine (such as Moderna, Pfizer or Novavax), or your first dose of a one-shot vaccine (such as Johnson & Johnson).

➤➤ Getting tested for COVID-19 keeps our communities safer.

Monitor your health for symptoms of COVID-19. It is possible to be sick with COVID-19 even if you are vaccinated. The symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- Cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fever of 100.4°F/38°C or higher
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle pain or body aches
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell

The symptoms of COVID-19 and the symptoms of the seasonal influenza (flu) are very similar.

The only way to know for sure whether you have COVID-19, the flu, or another cold virus is to get tested.
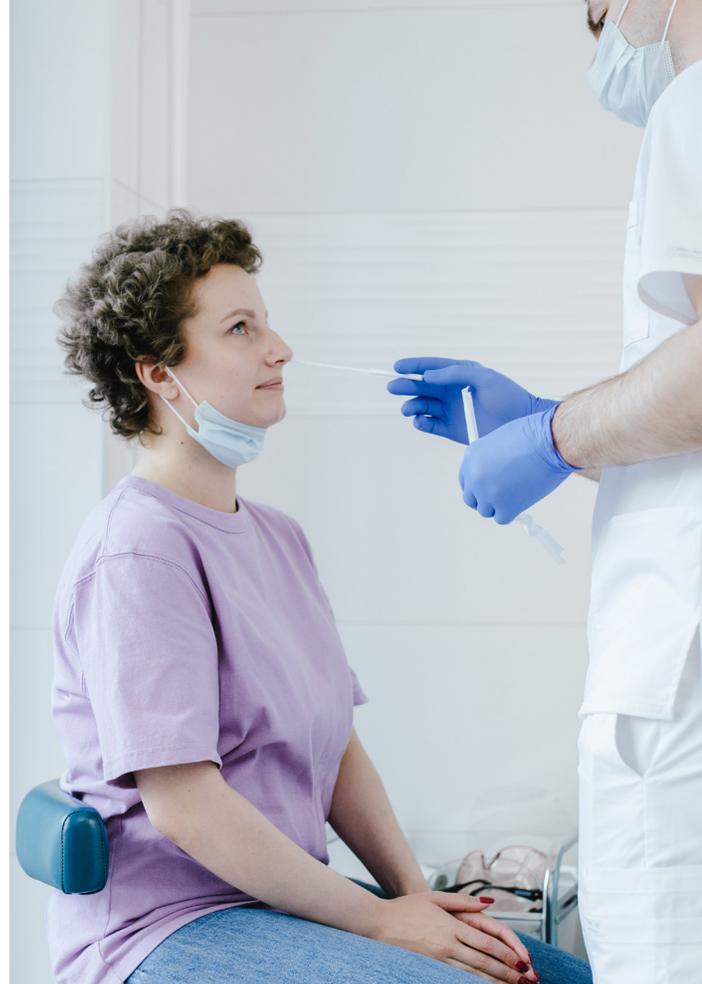
Get tested to protect your family and community

Even if you are vaccinated, you can get infected with COVID-19 and may not know it because you may not feel sick at all. By getting tested and staying away from others until you know the results, you can help stop the spread of COVID-19 and protect your community. Anyone can get tested, including adults, children and babies.

You should get tested:

- If you have symptoms
- If you have been around someone else who tested positive
- Before and after you travel
- Before and after you gather indoors with many people
- If it is required by your school or work

Many places offer testing

You may be able to get a test at a doctor's office, a community testing site, work, school, or a pharmacy. Many pharmacies also carry at-home tests you can do yourself. Ask IOM or your resettlement agency about other testing resources in your community.

Testing is confidential

You can get a confidential test regardless of your immigration status or whether you have medical insurance or an ID.

Testing is fast and safe

You or a healthcare provider may take a sample from your nose, throat, or saliva. Some tests give you results in a few minutes, and other tests may take a day or more.

Stay home and get tested

» **Stay home if you are sick, while you wait for test results, or if you test positive for COVID-19.**

Staying home from work, school or social events anytime you feel sick and while you wait for test results is one of the most important things you can do to protect your family, friends and community.

It is important to do this if you have COVID-19, even if you do not feel sick at all. Many people can treat symptoms of COVID-19 at home. Always check with your healthcare provider before taking any medicines.

Many healthcare providers recommend:

- Taking medicine, like acetaminophen or ibuprofen, to reduce fever

- Getting plenty of rest to help the body fight the virus

- Staying home and away from others, and wearing a mask around loved ones.

- Drinking lots of water

- Taking cold medicine (like cough medicine) to make you more comfortable

  Cough medicine is safe for children aged 6 years and older.

There are other medicines available that can help you recover more quickly from COVID-19, but it is important to start them right away, especially if you are at risk for becoming dangerously ill.

- See a doctor or pharmacist to get this medicine if your COVID-19 symptoms are getting worse.

- Call your resettlement agency case worker if you need help, such as needing an interpreter to talk to a doctor.

›› Call your healthcare provider if you are more likely to get dangerously ill.

People with certain conditions listed below are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19.

This means they are more likely to:

- Be hospitalized
- Need intensive care
- Require a ventilator to help them breathe
- Die

This applies to people who:

- Are 65 years old or older
- Are overweight
- Are pregnant
- Have diabetes
- Have heart problems like heart failure, coronary artery disease, cardiomyopathies, or high blood pressure (hypertension)
- Have lung problems like COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), asthma (moderate to severe), interstitial lung disease, cystic fibrosis, and pulmonary hypertension
- Have other conditions like cancer, chronic liver disease, chronic kidney disease, sickle cell disease, HIV, or a weakened immune system
- Have a neurodevelopmental disorder like cerebral palsy
- Have a medical device like a tracheostomy, gastrostomy, or positive pressure ventilation

If you have any of these conditions, call your healthcare provider if you get COVID-19. They may be able to give you medicine to help you recover, but it is important to start the medicine right away.

In an emergency

If you have any of these severe symptoms, seek emergency medical care immediately by calling 9-1-1 or going to an urgent care center or hospital emergency department:

- Trouble breathing
- Constant chest pain or pressure
- Confusion
- Cannot wake up or stay awake
- Changes in skin color

Stay safe while traveling

» Stay safe when you travel to the U.S.

Before departure

- Visit your healthcare provider and prepare your medical records, including your COVID-19 vaccination and testing records.
- Receive a 12-week supply of your regular medications.
- Discuss COVID-19 vaccination and booster options with your healthcare provider.

During travel

- Wear a mask in airports, stations, and public transportation, even if you've been vaccinated.
- Wash your hands often or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Notify IOM or airline staff if you feel sick during travel.

After arrival

- Get tested 3-5 days after arrival and watch for symptoms of COVID-19.
- Ask your healthcare provider or resettlement agency case worker about COVID-19 vaccination and booster options if you are not up-to-date with your vaccines.

Learn more online.

⟩⟩ You can get healthcare in the United States.

Your resettlement agency will assist with your paperwork that will help you pay for healthcare and arrange your first healthcare appointment in the United States.

Please bring all medical and vaccination records to this appointment.

Pharmacies, doctor's offices or clinics, and hospitals are all places where you can get healthcare.

- If your problem is minor or routine, go to a pharmacy to get the medicine you need to treat it at home. Explain your problem to the pharmacy staff and they will help you choose the right treatment.
- If you are not able to treat your condition at home, consider going to a doctor's office or clinic.
- If you have a medical emergency, call 9-1-1 or go to an urgent care center or hospital emergency department.

Some medicines require a prescription, and others do not.

Prescriptions are special permissions that doctors can give you so you can buy the medicine you need at a pharmacy. Many medicines are available without a prescription, but others are not.

Please inform IOM (or your resettlement agency if you're already in the US) if you don't have enough of your medications to last your first month in the United States.

Healthcare in the United States can be expensive, but there are payment options.

Government programs pay the health care costs for refugees when they first arrive, and for low-income people who qualify for programs. Other people rely on private health insurance to pay for their health costs.

You have the right to receive healthcare in your language.

Doctors' offices and clinics have interpreters that can help you understand and communicate with the medical staff. Ask the medical staff questions if there is anything you don't understand about your illness or treatment.

Healthcare is private.

Your doctor, clinic or pharmacy cannot share information about your healthcare with anyone - not even your family - without your permission.

❯❯ Where to get help.

Call your resettlement agency case worker of your healthcare provider if you have questions or need help with anything. Record their contact information below.

Healthcare Provider Contact Information

Name: _____

Phone number: _____ - _____ - _____

Resettlement Agency Case Worker Contact Information

Name: _____

Phone number: _____ - _____ - _____

For more information about COVID-19 in your language, visit **https://nrcrim.org/translations**