

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Get important answers to common health care journey questions.

USE OF THIS MATERIAL AND DISCLAIMER

Please note that the COVID-19 situation is evolving and the following information may change daily. This material is provided as general guidance and only for informational purposes and is not intended for prevention, diagnosis, or treatment purposes nor a substitute for professional medical advice. Medical guidance and treatment decisions should always be determined by a licensed healthcare professional.

Q: Should I visit the doctor right now?

There are a variety of factors to look at as you weigh the benefits of visiting your doctor and the health risks of COVID-19. The goal is to keep people healthy, so please talk to your doctor and consider current CDC and local public health official guidelines to determine if you should visit your doctor.

Q: What if my clinic is closed?

Stay connected with your doctor's office so you can schedule a time to talk about the next step in your treatment journey. You can call the office directly or check the clinic's website, social media, or patient portal for options to visit your doctor without going to the office. Many healthcare providers are offering remote visits through telehealth instead of an in-person office visit.

Q: When will my clinic reopen?

Each clinic will make this decision individually, following guidance from their state and local governments. It is difficult to predict when any one clinic will reopen. Keep in touch with your doctor's office by phone, the clinic's website, or social media to learn about new precautionary measures or resources available to you.

Q: My clinic is open. What should I do now?

You can call your clinic to discuss your condition and healthcare needs. Many clinics have dedicated hotlines or nurse advice lines to help you decide if and when to be seen. You can also check your clinic's website.

Q: What precautions can help reduce my risk of exposure during office visits?

Here are seven precautions that your healthcare provider may have in place to help reduce your risk of exposure during an office visit.¹ Ask your healthcare provider if they are following any of these or other precautions:

- Separating COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 patients by location, scheduling, or staff
- Screening patients upon arrival, before they enter the facility
- Testing patients before they arrive for elective procedures
- Masks for all patients and appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) for staff
- Sanitizing public spaces continuously
- Social distancing, especially in the reception area
- Alternatives to office visits: curbside or drive-through visits, house visits, and telehealth

Q: What if I am in a high-risk group?

According to the CDC, some people have a higher risk of developing severe COVID-19 symptoms that may require hospitalization.² These “high-risk groups” include people 65 years and older, people who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility, and people with cardiovascular disease, diabetes, hypertension, severe obesity, chronic respiratory disease, or cancer.^{1,2} You may also be in a high-risk group if you have a condition that weakens your immune system, including renal failure, liver disease, bone marrow or organ transplants, immune deficiencies, poorly controlled HIV or AIDS, and long-term use of corticosteroids and other immune-weakening medications.² However, information about COVID-19 changes frequently. It is important to talk to your doctor to decide if you should be seen in person. (Remember, telehealth may be an option too.) If you need to be seen, follow your clinic’s instructions and CDC guidelines to reduce the risk of exposure.

Q. If my doctor wants to see me in person, should I wear a mask or face cover?

Yes. Wear a cloth face cover when you go out in public to help protect other people in case you are infected.^{3,4} Note that current CDC guidelines say cloth face coverings should not be placed on children under age two or anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.⁴

Please refer to current guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), World Health Organization (WHO), and relevant federal, state, and local authorities and local public health officials for the latest information.

REFERENCES

1. Nick Hauger, Colin Gelbaugh, and Anna Yakovenko. “Patients are frightened to seek necessary care amid Covid-19. Here’s how to overcome their fears.” Advisory Board, May 1, 2020. <https://www.advisory.com/research/health-care-advisory-board/blogs/at-the-helm/2020/05/provider-organizations-covid-19>
2. CDC Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). “People Who Are at Higher Risk for Severe Illness.” Accessed June 9, 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/people-at-higher-risk.html>
3. CDC Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). “How to Protect Yourself & Others.” Accessed June 9, 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>
4. CDC Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). “Use of Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19.” Accessed June 9, 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>

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