

UCI Health Live Well Newsletter: EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT COVID-19

This is a special edition newsletter to provide the most relevant and useful information about staying healthy during this difficult time. Your health is our top priority and we encourage everyone to live well.

UCI Health infectious disease experts are assisting with statewide and national efforts to track the outbreak and contain the spread of COVID-19, or novel coronavirus.

Our experts are in regular contact with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the Orange County Health Care Agency (HCA).

Our primary objective at UCI Health is to ensure the safety of patients and employees while delivering world-class care at our hospital and community locations.

Facts about COVID-19

- The vast majority of people who get it will have mild to moderate symptoms and do not need hospitalization.
- Children are unlikely to get ill from COVID-19, but they can bring the illness home to others who are immunocompromised.
- COVID-19 is passed between people thorough coughing and sneezing or through the hands when they come into contact with a sick person's secretions.
- How you can help prevent it
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Not all hand sanitizers contain enough alcohol.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick, and keep at least three feet between yourself and others.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Stay home and stay away from others when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces with a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- If you're healthy, you don't need a mask
- Masks should be reserved for those who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others and for medical personnel.
- Call ahead if you have symptoms
- If you or someone close to you has a fever, cough or shortness of breath, contact your doctors' office in advance. They will direct you on next steps.

What does social distancing mean?

The rules have been changing rapidly. Scenes like this shouldn't happen during the COVID-19 pandemic. Keep at least six feet between yourself and others. Catch up with your friends using digital tools.

Some less-than-welcome words and phrases have been added recently to our vocabularies: COVID-19, N95 masks, index case and community spread. Now, of course, there is social distancing.



But with the rules changing rapidly on which behaviors will keep us safe from the novel coronavirus, many people are confused about exactly what social distancing is or what it entails.

At one point, the rule in California was that restaurants could stay open but had to seat fewer people and space them farther apart. That quickly changed to allow only takeout food.

Preventing exposure to coronavirus

The idea behind social distancing is to stay far enough away from others to prevent exposure to the contagious disease, and to use safe hygiene practices at all times, UCI Health infectious disease experts say.

Droplets from the sneezes and coughs of infected individuals can sicken us, as well as leave the virus on surfaces we touch then transmit to our eyes, nose or mouth when we touch our faces. But what distance is far enough and how do we avoid contaminated surfaces?

Tips to keeping your distance

Here are some helpful guidelines:

- **Avoid crowded places.** According to the American Psychological Association, that includes crowded restaurants, concerts, parties and, when possible, public transit. Many gathering places already are closed, but not in all areas. The more people with whom you're in close contact, the higher the chances of exposure. Cancel in-person meetings and social gatherings or hold them online.
- **Stay six feet from people who are not members of your household**, the APA advises, so that you maintain a safe distance from droplets someone may spread by sneezing or coughing.
- **Change your greeting method.** Remember the elbow bumps that became popular for a short while after the public was warned against shaking hands? That's too close. Try a nod, a bow or wave from a distance.

- **Going outside for walks and fresh air** is considered a healthy and safe activity, according to the California Department of Public Health – but only if you maintain that important six-foot separation between yourself and others.
- **Wash your hands with soap and water** frequently and thoroughly – for at least 20 seconds. When that isn't possible, use hand sanitizer, the World Health Organization says. Both practices dissolve the structure of the virus.
- **Use a tissue or your elbow** to catch your own sneezes and coughs.

When six feet isn't enough

The state of California is advising that people age 65 and older and those with a variety of health complications observe even greater social distancing, staying inside their homes to the extent possible except for outdoor exercise.

If possible, have friends or relatives do the shopping for you, or order groceries online.

Remember, stay-at-home orders now apply to everyone except those whose jobs are considered essential, such as doctors, nurses and first responders. Your help is needed to stem the spread of COVID-19.

Coping with the stress of COVID-19

Helpful tips for the quarantined, social distancers and parents

The global outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-2019) is having an impact on the mental health of millions of people.

Thanks to a 24-hour news cycle, near-constant social media use, empty store shelves and a flood of inaccurate information, reports of anxiety, fear and uncertainty are on the rise.

These fears can be overwhelming and lead to strong emotions in both children and adults, says UCI Health psychiatrist [Dr. Rimal Bera](#).



"Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations," he says, noting that how an emergency affects a person's mental health can depend on a number of factors, including:

- Their past experiences
- Their personal characteristics
- Their social and economic circumstances
- The social and economic circumstances of the community
- The availability of local resources

Signs of emotional distress

Research has shown that people can become more distressed when exposed to repeated imagery or reports in the media about the outbreak. In fact, UCI psychologist [E. Alison Holman, PhD](#), says such imagery can trigger symptoms that resemble those of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Reactions that signal stress include:

- Fear and worry about your own health status and that of your loved ones who may have been exposed to COVID-19
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco or other drugs

People with preexisting medical or mental health conditions should continue with their treatment plans during this outbreak and monitor for any new symptoms.

Call your healthcare provider if stress reactions interfere with your daily activities for several days in a row.

How to take care of your mental health

- **Watch what you watch.** Avoid excessive exposure to media coverage of COVID-19. It can be upsetting to hear about the crisis and see images repeatedly.
- **Take care of your body and spirit.** Take deep breaths, stretch or meditate. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep and avoid alcohol and drugs.
- **Make time to unwind.** Remind yourself that strong feelings will fade. Try to do activities you enjoy and maintain as much normalcy as possible.
- **Maintain a sense of hope** and positive thinking.
- **You're not alone.** Know that feeling stressed, depressed, guilty, or angry is common.
- **Connect with others.** Share your concerns and how you are feeling with a friend or family member.
- **Connect with others who may be experiencing stress about the outbreak.** Talk about your feelings about the outbreak, share reliable health information and enjoy conversation related to the outbreak.

Signs a child is feeling stress

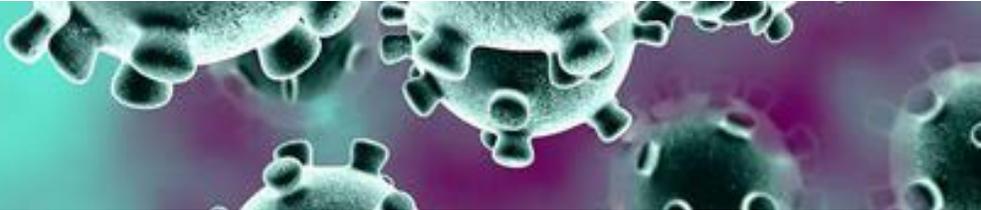
Children react, in part, on what they see from the adults around them.

When parents and caregivers deal with the COVID-19 calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children. Parents can be more reassuring to others around them, especially children, if they are better prepared.

Not all children respond to stress in the same way, notes Bera.

Some common changes to watch for in children:

- Excessive crying and irritation
- Returning to behaviors they have outgrown (e.g., toileting accidents or bedwetting)
- Excessive worry or sadness
- Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits
- Irritability and “acting out” behaviors
- Poor school performance or avoiding school
- Difficulty with attention and concentration
- Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past
- Unexplained headaches or body pain
- Use of alcohol, tobacco or other drugs



Talking about COVID-19

There are a number of things you can do to help your children make sense of what's happening, Bera says:

- Take time to talk with your child about the COVID-19 outbreak. Answer questions and share facts about COVID-19 in a way that your child can understand.
- Reassure your child that they are safe.
- Let them know it is OK if they feel upset.
- Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.
- Limit your child's exposure to media coverage of the event. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.
- Help your child to have a sense of structure. Once it is safe to return to school or childcare, help them return to their regular activity.
- Be a role model. Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members and rely on your social support system.

Working or quarantined at home?

Whether you're being quarantined because of possible COVID-19 exposure or you're staying home for social distancing, being confined can feel lonely and stressful for many, even if they don't get sick, says Bera.

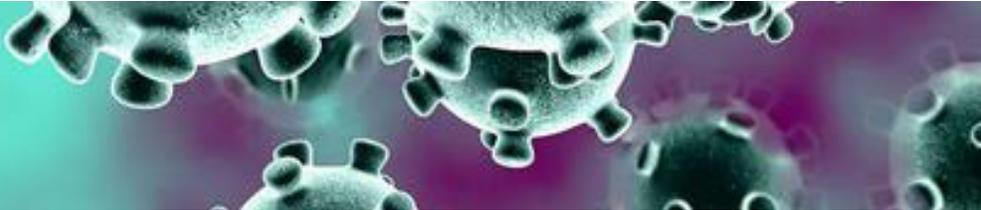
Some typical reactions after being released from COVID-19 quarantine can include:

- Mixed emotions, including relief after quarantine
- Fear and worry about your own health status and that of your loved ones who may have been exposed to COVID-19
- Stress from the experience of monitoring yourself, or being monitored by others for signs and symptoms of COVID-19
- Sadness, anger or frustration because friends or loved ones have unfounded fears of contracting the disease from contact with you, even though you have been determined not to be contagious
- Guilt about not being able to perform normal work or parenting duties during quarantine

Keeping up a disrupted routine

While you're away from work at your regular routine, it can be easy to slip into bad habits. A few tips to help you stay on track:

- Understand that this is a short-term situation and you will be back at work soon.
- Try to complete the same amount of work each day that you would if you were at work.
- See the positive side: You may be able to complete projects that you have not been able to do during normal work or complete items that you were behind on.
- Keep in contact with your supervisor and coworkers about any tasks they would like completed. Give people updates on how you are doing. Contact by email or phone.
- Use the time to relax: Eat a good meal, read, listen to music, take a bath or talk to family.



Disinfecting your home to kill the coronavirus

Virus can remain on cardboard, copper, plastic and steel from hours to days

As coronavirus spreads around the globe, millions of people are being told to wash their hands.

But your hands aren't the only things you need to keep clean. Researchers have found that the virus can remain on cardboard, copper, plastic and steel from hours to days.

Regular cleaning of surfaces with effective disinfectants is another weapon in the fight against the virus that causes COVID-19. Infectious disease experts say that doing so can help reduce the spread of the illness.



How long does COVID-19 live?

A recent study by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) found that coronavirus can live on surfaces for:

- Four hours on copper
- 4 hours on cardboard
- Two to three days on plastic and stainless steel

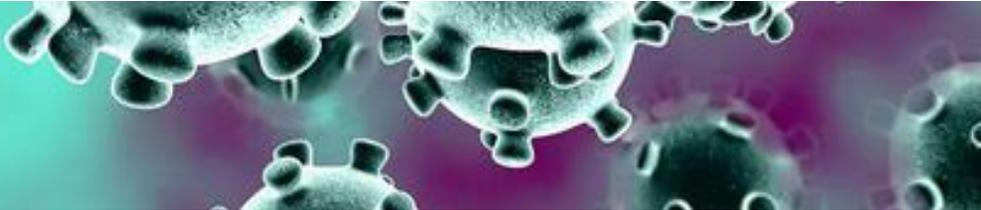
The good news is that cleaning and disinfecting indoor surfaces can shorten the virus's lifespan, provided it's done correctly – clean first, then disinfect, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The purpose of cleaning before disinfecting is to remove as many germs as possible to decrease the risk of spreading infection. Following up with disinfectant on remaining germs kills remaining germs and further reduces the spread of infection.

Focus on high-touch surfaces

The CDC recommends frequent cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces. These include:

- Tables
- Doorknobs
- Light switches
- Handles
- Desks



- Toilets
- Faucets
- Sinks

Use standard household cleaners and EPA-registered disinfectants on these surfaces.

Cleaning and disinfecting

When a surface is dirty, clean it using detergent or soap and water before disinfecting.

Afterward, use diluted household bleach solutions, alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol, or other household disinfectants recommended by the U.S. Environmental Protection agency to combat coronavirus.

Follow label instructions on standard household cleaners such as:

- Alcohol-based wipes (no baby wipes)
- Clorox
- Lysol
- Microban
- Hydrogen peroxide

Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser. You can prepare your own bleach solution by:

- Mixing 5 tablespoons bleach per gallon of water or
- Mixing 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water

Be sure to protect yourself while cleaning and disinfecting by wearing gloves and ensuring good ventilation. If you use disposable gloves, discard them after use. If you have reusable gloves, clean and store them in a dry location.

Be sure to clean your hands immediately after removing gloves.

Cleaning when someone has COVID-19

Anyone who has COVID-19 should sequester in a specific room. Clean the sick person's space as needed to avoid unnecessary contact and exposure to the virus.

If you share a bathroom, clean and disinfect all surfaces after each use by the ill person.

Again, always wear gloves when cleaning and disinfecting for COVID-19. And be sure to clean your hands immediately after removing gloves.

An ill person should also eat in the room they are staying in to minimize spreading the virus. Always handle non-disposable food items like utensils and plates with gloves and wash with soap and hot water. Be sure to clean hands after handling these items and after disposing trash.

Laundry guidelines and COVID-19

Launder clothing, towels, linens, and other items according to manufacturer instructions but be sure to:

- Use the warmest water setting possible to kill germs.
- Minimize shaking of contaminated items before placing in the washer to limit the dispersion of particles.
- Wear gloves when handling an ill person's laundry.
- Always clean your hands immediately after removing gloves.

Normal washing with laundry detergents, hot water and hot dryers are good for killing pathogens, UCI infectious disease experts say. If you cannot wash clothes right away, it's OK to put them in a laundry basket. Virus degrades and deteriorates over time without a live host.

Even if viruses are on clothing, the only way to get sick is by rubbing hands on the cloth right after a droplet spray and then touching mouth, eyes or nose without washing hands.

Hand hygiene

Caregivers and others living in a household with a patient who has COVID-19 should be sure to clean their hands frequently with soap and warm water for 20 seconds, especially after removing gloves or being in contact with the ill person.

CDC guidelines call for handwashing if hands are visibly soiled, before eating and after using the restroom. Otherwise using a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol is effective, and often easier and more accessible.

Be sure to practice normal preventive measures and wash your hands:

- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After using a bathroom
- Before eating or preparing food
- After contact with pets or other animals

You've heard it before for a reason: Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth, and wipe the surfaces of remote controls, phones, tablets and other high-touch surfaces at home and in your car with a good disinfectant wipe.

[Learn more about CDC cleaning and disinfecting guidelines >](#)

Blood donors needed to ease COVID-19-spurred supply shortage

Blood donations are exempt from stay-at-home order

With COVID-19 restrictions beginning to crimp the region's blood supply, the UCI Health Blood Donor Center in Orange has expanded its hours of operation to six days a week to boost donations for its patients.

The call for more donations comes as the American Red Cross announced a severe blood shortage nationally due to widespread blood drive cancellations during the current novel coronavirus outbreak.

At the same time, the blood donor center is closing its Irvine location in UCI Irvine student center, which is being shuttered along with the much of the rest of the campus to prevent the virus' spread.

Donations of whole blood and platelets there have been a mainstay of UCI Health blood supplies for years.

Shortage could affect UCI Medical Center

Dr. Minh-Ha Tran, medical director of UCI Health Transfusion Services, expects the shrinking of the nation's blood supply to begin having an impact on UCI Medical Center soon. In anticipation, the medical center is postponing non-urgent procedures and surgeries to reduce demand for critical resources.



"Whole blood and platelet donations are now more crucial than ever," he said. "Every day, UCI Medical Center patients require blood or platelets to help fight cancer, to replace what is lost in trauma or to treat a chronic disease. Your donation can make a huge difference in the life of someone here in Orange County."

Blood donations are exempt from Gov. Gavin Newsom's order for all Californians to stay at home to protect against the spread of COVID-19. Californians can and should continue to donate blood, Newsom said Thursday evening in announcing the restrictions.

One donor = three lives

Orange County and California are not alone in projecting a drop in blood supply. The COVID-19 crisis is causing severe blood shortages across the nation, prompting U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams to urge healthy people to donate blood, platelets or plasma.

"One person's blood can save three lives," he said during a presidential news conference at the White House on Thursday.

The American Red Cross has estimated that an unprecedented 4,600 of its blood drives have been canceled across the country over COVID-19 concerns, leading to 143,600 fewer units collected. Hospital transfusion services and blood centers nationwide are experiencing a similar drop off because fear about coronavirus is keeping people from donating blood.

Routine disinfection and screening intensified

Mindful of those concerns, the UCI Health Blood Donor Center has intensified routine cleaning and disinfecting of common areas throughout the center, and staff members who already are meticulous about hand hygiene are reminded to wash hands and use hand sanitizer after every donor encounter.

The center also has stepped up pre-screening of potential donors, and recommends that people avoid donating if they have symptoms of an upper respiratory infection or have traveled to certain areas outside the U.S.

Advance appointments are advised to ensure that the center is able to maintain COVID-19 self-distancing in the center's limited space.

How to make an appointment

Healthy people who want to donate may schedule an appointment through the UCI Blood Donor Center website or by calling 714-456-5733. The center is located in Pavilion 3, Room 400 at the medical center, 101 The City Drive South, Orange, CA 92868.

Appointments for platelet donations are available Monday through Saturday from 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Whole blood donation appointments are available Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Why blood donation matters

The importance of blood donation cannot be overstated, according to the Red Cross. Along with the surgeon general's admonition that one person's contribution can benefit three people in need, other facts include:

- Every two seconds, someone in the United States is in need of blood.
- Only 5% of healthy people who are eligible to donate blood actually do so.
- Although scientists are testing alternatives like hemoglobin-based oxygen carriers, these products are not readily available. There remains no replacement for donated blood and platelets.
- Donating blood is a direct way to help your community, especially the during the current COVID-19 crisis.

Tran noted that all blood and platelet donations made at the center benefit only UCI Health patients.

"Donating blood," he said, "is an easy and safe way to save a life."

Protecting seniors and the vulnerable from COVID-19

As the novel coronavirus spreads around the globe, the populations most vulnerable to the disease have been older adults and people with pre-existing conditions, such as heart or lung disease, diabetes or compromised immune systems.

Data collected from known cases of COVID-19 indicate that people over age 60 are more likely to experience serious illness, with the risk increasing in people age 70 and older.



This is especially important given that more than a million people in the United States are in nursing homes and another 800,000 are in residential care communities, where contagion from influenza, colds and even bacterial infections are of serious concern. By following key recommendations to stop the spread and lessen the impact of the virus that causes COVID-19, we can ensure that older adults and people with existing health problems have a better chance of remaining healthy, says Dr. Lisa Gibbs, director of the UCI Health SeniorHealth Center.

Preventing COVID-19

The novel coronavirus can cause mild to severe respiratory infections, with symptoms of fever, cough and shortness of breath, according to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC). It spreads by droplets from the coughs and sneezes of infected individuals that enter the body by nose, mouth and eyes.

For people at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19 because of age or long-term health problems, the CDC recommends the following actions to prevent infection:

- Stay home and practice social distancing.
- If you need to leave home for essential reasons, such as healthcare and food, avoid crowds and contact with sick people. Keep space between yourself and others.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol content if soap and water are unavailable.
- If you have to sneeze or cough, do so into the curve of your elbow or into a tissue that you then discard.
- Use alternatives to shaking hands with people.
- Avoid touching elevator buttons, door handles and handrails; use a tissue or sleeve instead.

- If you are sick, stay home to avoid spreading any germs.
- Keep a bottle of hand sanitizer available at home and in the car.
- Avoid cruises and nonessential air travel.

Social distancing, not social isolation

Older adults and people with existing health conditions sometimes deal with anxiety and depression. Recommendations to stay home or to and stay a safe distance from others to avoid exposure to COVID-19, may reinforce such feelings in some people.

It doesn't have to, says Gibbs, a professor of family medicine and chief of the Division of Geriatric Medicine and Gerontology at UCI School of Medicine.

"Social distancing is required to slow the transmission of COVID-19, but this need not be social isolation," she says. "People with depression or anxiety should be especially proactive by calling friends and family, and using social media."

It's also good idea to limit the barrage of media information about the novel coronavirus and its effects.

"Watching the news constantly may also increase anxiety. People should be encouraged to find one or two sites that provide accurate information and check them only periodically through the day," Gibbs says.

When exposure to COVID-19 is a concern

Should there be an outbreak of COVID-19 in your community, the CDC recommends that vulnerable people stay home as much as possible to reduce the risk of exposure.

To prepare for an extended stay at home:

- Stock up on groceries, medical supplies and over-the-counter medications
- Contact your health provider to obtain extra prescription medications (through mail order if necessary) if you need to stay home for a prolonged period of time
- In the home, frequently wipe down tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, toilets, faucets, sinks and cell phones

It also helps to have food brought in by family and social networks, and to stay connected to others by phone or email in case a caregiver is needed.

Pay attention to symptoms

It's also important to pay close attention to symptoms and warning signs of any respiratory infection, including the seasonal flu:

- Coughing

- Shortness of breath
- Difficulty breathing
- Fever

More alarming symptoms include:

- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- Confusion
- Bluish lips and face

Consult your health provider for these or other symptoms that are concerning. Unless this is an emergency, stay home and contact your healthcare professional for guidance.