How do I prevent and prepare for COVID-19?

Public health is everyone's responsibility. The best way to prevent disease and illness is to practice tried and true public health mitigation measures, including:

Get vaccinated

Vaccines are the most effective tools to protect your health and prevent the spread of disease.

Vaccination against COVID-19 and other preventable diseases can protect against the risk of severe illness, hospitalization, and death.

The COVID-19 vaccines used in the U.S. are safe, free, and highly effective, including against known variants.

Wash your hands

Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds to help stop the spread of germs. If soap
and water are not available, use hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol.

When Should I Wash My Hands?

Make good hand hygiene a habit. It's very important to wash your hands:

- Before eating and cooking
- After using the bathroom
- After cleaning around the house
- After touching pets and other animals
- Before and after visiting or taking care of sick people
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After being outside
- After handling mail or packages

Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth

Studies have found that, on average, people can touch their face anywhere from 15-23 times an hour
(Kwok, Gralton, & McLaws, 2015) (Nicas & Best, 2008).

Throughout any given day, hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated,
hands can transfer viruses to your eyes, nose, or mouth.

Cover coughs and sneezes

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw used tissues into the trash. If tissues are unavailable, you can use your sleeve or the inside of your elbow.

This is important because COVID-19 spreads when an infected person breathes out droplets and very
small particles that contain the virus. These droplets and particles can be breathed in by other people
or land on their eyes, noses, or mouth.

By following good respiratory hygiene, you can protect people around you from viruses that cause
diseases such as COVID-19, influenza (flu), and the common cold.

Clean and disinfect "high-touch" surfaces

Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces often, including, but not limited to, tables, doorknobs,
light switches, countertops, handles, desks, and phones.

Cleaning with a household cleaner that contains soap or detergent reduces the amount of germs on
surfaces and decreases risk of infection from surfaces. In most situations, cleaning alone removes most
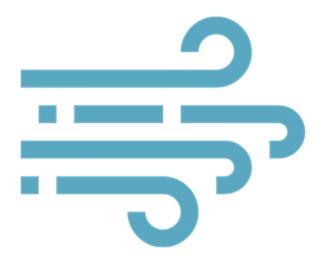virus particles on surfaces.

Disinfection to reduce transmission of COVID-19 at home is likely not needed unless someone in your
home is sick or if someone who is positive for COVID-19 has been in your home within the last 24
hours. If disinfection is needed, **always** follow the directions on the label and use a disinfectant product
from EPA List N that is effective against COVID-19. If products on EPA List N are not
available, bleach solutions can be used if appropriate for the surface.

Improve ventilation

Improving ventilation (air flow) can help prevent virus particles from accumulating in the air in your
home. Good ventilation, along with other mitigation measures, can help prevent you from getting and
spreading COVID-19.

Below are ways you can improve ventilation in your home. Use as many ways as you can (open windows, use air filters, and turn on fans) to help clear out virus particles in your home faster.

- **Bringing fresh, outdoor air into your home** helps keep virus particles from accumulating inside. **Do not open windows and doors if doing so is unsafe** (for example, presence of young children and pets, risk of falling, triggering asthma symptoms, high levels of outdoor pollution).
- **Filter the air in your home.**
    - In homes where the HVAC fan operation can be controlled by a thermostat, set the fan
      to the "on" position instead of "auto" when you have visitors. This allows the fan to run continuously, even if heating or air conditioning is not on.
    - **Pleated filters.** They are more efficient than ordinary furnace filters and can be found in
      hardware stores. They should be installed initially within the HVAC system by a

professional, if possible. If that is not possible, carefully follow the manufacturer's instructions to replace the filter yourself.
- o Make sure the **filter fits properly in the unit.**
- o **Change your filter** every three months or according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- o Ideally, have the **ventilation system inspected and adjusted** by a professional every

  year to make sure it is operating efficiently.
- o If you do not have an HVAC system or just want extra filtration, consider using a **portable high-efficiency particulate air cleaner.** They are the most efficient filters on

  the market for trapping particles that people exhale when breathing, talking, singing, coughing, and sneezing. Be sure to select one that is the right size for the room(s) – one

  with a Clean Air Delivery Rate that meets or exceeds the square footage of the room in

  which it will be used.
- Turning on the exhaust fan in your bathroom and kitchen that vent outdoors can help move air outside. Although some stove exhaust fans do not send air outside, they can still improve air

  flow and keep virus particles from being concentrated in one place.
- Use fans and ceiling fans to improve air flow whether windows are open or not. Be sure to point fans away from people. If windows can be opened, place fans as close to windows as possible and blowing outside. This helps get rid of virus particles in your home.