

Masking Still Matters: COVID-19 Safety

In 2025, it can feel like we're living in a "post-COVID" world. But COVID-19 is still here, continuing to cause infections (both mild and severe) and long-term health impacts. Trans and queer people in particular are at higher risk of experiencing long-term symptoms from COVID-19, referred to as "long COVID."

While most organizations and public health institutions have dropped recommendations for COVID-19 precautions beyond vaccination, we now have more information than ever about how to prevent COVID infections and reduce the risk of long COVID.



When we take steps to prevent COVID-19 transmission, we are protecting our long-term health and the health of our communities.

Here are eight things you can do to reduce the spread of COVID-19 to you and your community:

1. Wear a well-fitting mask. The best way to reduce COVID transmission is by wearing a high-quality, well-fitting mask (ideally, a KN95, N95). Local mask blocs may be helpful for getting masks for free. Not every mask may work for your face shape or specific needs. Even though they are less effective, wearing a surgical or cloth mask is better than no mask at all.

2. If you're able to get vaccinated against COVID-19, make sure you're up to date on the recommended shots and boosters. Vaccines reduce the likelihood of severe illness from COVID-19. While they may reduce the risk of long COVID, they do not prevent it entirely. Ideally, vaccines should be part of a layered approach to preventing COVID-19 infection.

Folks who are older or immunocompromised may have different recommendations for vaccine frequency; read more here.

3. If you're feeling sick or have been in contact with someone who has COVID-19, stay home. It's hard to miss out on fun events, but staying home when you're sick can help to protect your community from preventable illness and disability.

4. Communicate with the people you will meet with about prevention strategies. If you're meeting up with friends, check in with them about their preferences and sense of safety around COVID. Will your friends be masking? Would they feel more comfortable if your whole group follows the same prevention strategies?

5. Hang out outdoors. Areas with good airflow are lower risk for COVID infection. Especially if you're going to be unmasked or around lots of unmasked people, consider if you may be able to meet up at a park or outdoor gathering instead of indoors.

6. Carry hand sanitizer. Hand hygiene, especially before eating, can help to reduce the chance of bringing all kinds of germs into your body. Carrying a small container of hand sanitizer means you'll be able to clean your hands before eating or touching your face, without having to hike all the way to the restroom!

7. Take a COVID test before/after going into "riskier" environments. If you're going to a crowded event, seeing older or immunocompromised family members, or hanging out with a group of friends unmasked, taking a COVID-19 test beforehand can give you more information about your current COVID-19 status. At-home rapid tests are not always accurate, so taking multiple tests across several days can give you the best results.

If you believe you might have been exposed to COVID or test positive, refer to these suggestions for isolating and testing to prevent spread.

8. Honor your sense of safety. It may feel like there is peer pressure to drop precautions and return to "life as normal." Regardless of the health guidelines, it's important to check in with yourself about what feels comfortable to you. Whether you yourself are at increased risk for COVID or long COVID, or just want to reduce the spread, you can choose to take precautions even when others don't.

Additional resources:

Long COVID is a Trans Issue
ACT UP: COVID Safer Pride
masking through blackness – digital zine

What's Up with COVID and How to
Protect Yourself
COVID Cautious Queers Digital Zine
Long COVID Justice