



## Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) | Information for People Living with HIV

The impact of COVID-19 on people with HIV is not known. Current evidence indicates that the risk of severe illness increases with age and with certain chronic medical problems. In one case series, the median age of critically ill patients was 66 years and 72% had underlying co-morbid conditions, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, chronic lung disease, and immunosuppression.

Although people with HIV who are on treatment with a normal CD4 T-cell count may not be at an increased risk of serious illness, many people with HIV have conditions that increase their risk:

- Older age – nearly half of people in the United States living with diagnosed HIV are aged 50 and older.;
- Chronic medical problems – cardiovascular and chronic lung disease are more common in people living with HIV; and
- Immune suppression – indicated by a low CD4 T-cell count or not receiving antiretroviral treatment.

### How Can People with HIV Protect Themselves?

The basics for protecting yourself from COVID-19 are almost the same as for everyone:

- Following guidance from public health officials on social distancing found at [houstonemergency.org/covid19](https://houstonemergency.org/covid19)
  - Avoid gatherings of 10 or more people.
  - Maintain at least 6 feet of separation from other people.
- Practice healthy hygiene habits:
  - Wash hands with soap and water.
  - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
  - Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue and throw the tissue away. If you don't have a tissue, use the elbow of your sleeve. Don't use your hands to cover coughs and sneezes.
  - Avoid close contact with people who are sick, especially if you are at higher risk for coronavirus.
  - Get plenty of rest, drink plenty of fluids, eat healthy foods, and manage your stress to keep your immunity strong.
- Avoid eating or drinking in bars and restaurants – use drive-thru, pickup, delivery and [contactless delivery](#) options.
- Work or engage in schooling from home and avoid discretionary travel, shopping trips, and social visits.
- Maintain a social network remotely to help you stay socially connected and mentally healthy.
- Do not visit nursing homes or retirement or long-term care facilities unless to provide critical care.

In addition to general precautions to protect yourself, you should:

- Continuing your HIV medications to keep your immune system as healthy as possible.
- Make sure that you have adequate supplies and refills for your antiretrovirals and other medications.
- Establish a plan for clinical care, including use of telemedicine, if you have to stay at home.

Further information for people at risk for serious illness from COVID-19 is available at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>.

3/19/2020 | Adapted from California Department of Public Health