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Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention

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Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

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Groups at Higher Risk for Severe Illness

COVID-19 is a new disease and there is limited information regarding risk factors for severe illness. Based on the limited available information and clinical expertise, older adults and people of any age who have underlying health conditions might be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

We are learning more about COVID-19 every day; CDC will update the advice below as new information becomes available.

Reduce your risk of getting sick with COVID-19:

- Continue your medications and do not change your treatment plan without talking to your healthcare provider.
- Have at least a 2-week supply of prescription and non-prescription medications. Talk to your healthcare provider, insurer, and pharmacist about getting an extra supply (i.e., more than two weeks) if possible, to reduce trips to the pharmacy.
- Talk to your healthcare provider about whether your vaccinations are up-to-date. People with many underlying conditions, such as those who are immunocompromised, are recommended to receive vaccinations against influenza and pneumococcal pneumonia.
- Do not delay getting emergency care for your underlying condition because of COVID-19. Have contingency infection prevention plans to protect you from getting COVID-19 if you have an underlying condition.
- Call your healthcare provider if you have any concerns about your underlying medical condition and think that you may have COVID-19. If you need emergency help, call 911.

[Learn what else you can do](#) as someone who may be at higher risk for severe illness, it is important to stay away from other people as much as possible.

Actions you can take based on your condition factors

Asthma (moderate-to-severe)

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Moderate-to-severe [asthma](#) may put people at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

Actions to take

- Follow your [Asthma Action Plan](#).
- Keep your asthma under control.
- Continue your current medications, including any inhalers with steroids in them ("steroid inhalers").
- Know [how to use your inhaler](#).
- Avoid your [asthma triggers](#).
- If possible, have another member of your household who doesn't have asthma clear you. When they use cleaning and disinfecting products, have them:
 - Make sure that people with asthma are not in the room.
 - Minimize use of disinfectants that can cause an asthma attack.
 - Open windows or doors and use a fan that blows air outdoors.
 - Always follow the instructions on the product label.
 - Spray or pour spray products onto a cleaning cloth or paper towel instead of spraying directly onto the cleaning surface (if the product label allows).

Why you might be at higher risk

COVID-19 can affect your respiratory tract (nose, throat, lungs), cause an asthma attack, and serious illness.

Chronic kidney disease being treated with dialysis

[Chronic kidney disease](#) being treated with dialysis may increase a person's risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

Actions to take

- If you are on dialysis, you should NOT miss your treatments.
- Contact your dialysis clinic and your healthcare provider if you feel sick or have concerns.
- Plan to have enough food on hand to follow the [KCER 3-Day Emergency Diet Plan](#)  for dialysis patients in case you are unable to maintain your normal treatment schedule.

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Why you might be at higher risk

Dialysis patients are more prone to infection and severe illness because of weakened immune procedures to manage kidney failure; and coexisting conditions such as diabetes.

Chronic lung disease

Chronic lung diseases, such as [chronic obstructive pulmonary disease \(COPD\)](#) (including emphysema and bronchitis), idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and cystic fibrosis, may put people at higher risk of severe COVID-19.

Actions to take

- Keep taking your current medications, including those with steroids in them ("steroid" or "corticosteroids").
- Avoid triggers that make your symptoms worse.

Why you might be at higher risk

Based on data from other viral respiratory infections, COVID-19 might cause flare-ups of chronic conditions such as severe illness.

Diabetes

[Diabetes](#), including type 1, type 2, or gestational, may put people at higher risk of severe illness.

Actions to take

- Continue taking your diabetes pills and insulin as usual.
- Test your blood sugar every four hours and keep track of the results.
- Make sure that you have at least a two-week supply of your diabetes pills and insulin.
- Follow the [sick day guidelines for people with diabetes](#).

Why you might be at higher risk

People with diabetes whose blood sugar levels are often higher than their target are more likely to have severe illness.

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[health problems](#). Those health problems can make it harder to overcome COVID-19.

Hemoglobin Disorders

Hemoglobin disorders such as [sickle cell disease \(SCD\)](#) and [thalassemia](#) may put people at higher risk from COVID-19.

Actions to take

- Ask your healthcare provider about telemedicine or remote healthcare visits, and know when to go to the [emergency department](#).
- Work with your healthcare provider to manage [medications and therapies](#) for your condition (such as chelation therapy, blood transfusions, and prescriptions for pain management) and other health conditions you may have (such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and arthritis).
- Try to prevent vaso-occlusive episodes or pain crises by [avoiding possible triggers](#).
- Review our [healthy living with SCD guide](#) or our [healthy living with thalassemia guide](#) to help you live healthy.
- Find [SCD resources](#) and [thalassemia resources](#) to help navigate care and increase knowledge about SCD and thalassemia.
- Let friends and family know about the need for [healthy blood donors](#).

Why you might be at higher risk

Living with a hemoglobin disorder can lead to serious multi-organ complications, and conditions such as heart disease, liver disease, diabetes, iron overload, kidney disease, viral infections, or other health conditions may increase the risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

Immunocompromised

Many conditions and treatments can cause a person to have a weakened immune system, including [cancer](#) treatment, bone marrow or organ transplantation, immune deficiencies, HIV, not on HIV treatment, and prolonged use of corticosteroids and other immune weakening medications. For more information, see [Immunocompromised](#).

Actions to take

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- If you are immunocompromised, continue any recommended medications or treatr your healthcare provider.
- Call your healthcare provider if you have concerns about your condition or feel sick.

Why you might be at higher risk

People with a weakened immune system have reduced ability to fight infectious diseases, Knowledge is limited about the virus that causes COVID-19, but based on similar viruses, 1 immunocompromised patients may remain infectious for longer than other COVID-19 pat

Liver disease

[Chronic liver disease](#), including cirrhosis, may increase risk for serious illness from COVID

Actions to take

- Take your medications exactly as prescribed.

Why you might be at higher risk

Severe illness caused by COVID-19 and the medications used to treat some severe consec strain on the liver, particularly for those with underlying liver problems. People living with weakened immune system, leaving the body less able to fight COVID-19.

People aged 65 years and older

Older adults, 65 years and older, are at higher risk for severe illness and death from COVI

Actions to take

- Take your medications for any underlying health conditions exactly as prescribed.
- Follow the advice of your healthcare provider.
- Develop a [care plan](#) that summarizes your health conditions and current treatments
- Prepare yourself to stay home for long periods using [this checklist](#).

Why you might be at higher risk

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Although COVID-19 can affect any group, the older you are, the higher your risk of serious reported in the U.S. have been in [adults 65 years or older](#); risk of death is highest among immune systems of older adults weaken with age, making it harder to fight off infections. have chronic diseases that can increase the risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

People who live in a nursing home or long-term care

Many cases of COVID-19 in the U.S. have occurred among older adults living in nursing ho

Actions to take

- Carefully follow your facility's instructions for infection prevention.
- Notify staff right away if you feel sick.
- Ask your caretakers about the actions that are being taken at your nursing home or if you and your loved ones, including if and how they are limiting visitors.

Why you might be at higher risk

The communal nature of nursing homes and long-term care facilities, and the population often with underlying medical conditions), put those living in nursing homes at higher risk from COVID-19.

Serious heart conditions

Serious [heart conditions](#), including heart failure, coronary artery disease, congenital heart pulmonary hypertension, may put people at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

Actions to take

- Take your medication exactly as prescribed. Continue angiotensin converting enzyme or angiotensin-II receptor blockers (ARB) as prescribed by your healthcare provider for or high blood pressure. This is recommended by [current clinical guidelines](#).
- Make sure that you have at least a two-week supply of your heart disease medication (cholesterol and high blood pressure).
- People with hypertension should continue to manage and control their blood pressu

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directed.

Why you might be at higher risk

COVID-19, like other viral illnesses such as the flu, can damage the respiratory system and to work. For people with heart failure and other serious heart conditions this can lead to symptoms.

Severe obesity

Severe [obesity](#), defined as a [body mass index](#) (BMI) of 40 or above, puts people at higher COVID-19.

Actions to take

- Take your medications for any underlying health conditions exactly as prescribed.

Why you might be at higher risk

Severe obesity increases the risk of a serious breathing problem called acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS). ARDS is a major complication of COVID-19 and can cause difficulties with a doctor's ability to provide care for seriously ill patients. People living with severe obesity can have multiple serious chronic conditions that can increase the risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

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Asthma (moderate-to-severe)

Moderate-to-severe [asthma](#) may put people at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

Actions to take

- Follow your [Asthma Action Plan](#).
- Keep your asthma under control.
- Continue your current medications, including any inhalers with steroids in them (“steroids” or corticosteroids).
- Know [how to use your inhaler](#).
- Avoid your [asthma triggers](#).
- If possible, have another member of your household who doesn’t have asthma clean for you. When they use cleaning and disinfecting products, have them:
 - Make sure that people with asthma are not in the room.
 - Minimize use of disinfectants that can cause an asthma attack.
 - Open windows or doors and use a fan that blows air outdoors.
 - Always follow the instructions on the product label.
 - Spray or pour spray products onto a cleaning cloth or paper towel instead of spraying directly onto the cleaning surface (if the product label allows).

Why you might be at higher risk

COVID-19 can affect your respiratory tract (nose, throat, lungs), cause an asthma attack, pneumonia and serious illness.

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Chronic kidney disease being treated with dialysis

[Chronic kidney disease](#) being treated with dialysis may increase a person's risk for severe illness.

Actions to take

- If you are on dialysis, you should NOT miss your treatments.
- Contact your dialysis clinic and your healthcare provider if you feel sick or have concerns.
- Plan to have enough food on hand to follow the [KCER 3-Day Emergency Diet Plan](#)  dialysis patients in case you are unable to maintain your normal treatment schedule.

Why you might be at higher risk

Dialysis patients are more prone to infection and severe illness because of weakened immune systems and procedures to manage kidney failure; and coexisting conditions such as diabetes.

Chronic lung disease

Chronic lung diseases, such as [chronic obstructive pulmonary disease](#) (COPD) (including emphysema and chronic bronchitis), idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and cystic fibrosis, may put people at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

Actions to take

- Keep taking your current medications, including those with steroids in them ("steroid" or "corticosteroids").
- Avoid triggers that make your symptoms worse.

Why you might be at higher risk

Based on data from other viral respiratory infections, COVID-19 might cause flare-ups of chronic lung disease leading to severe illness.

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Diabetes

[Diabetes](#), including type 1, type 2, or gestational, may put people at higher risk of severe

Actions to take

- Continue taking your diabetes pills and insulin as usual.
- Test your blood sugar every four hours and keep track of the results.
- Make sure that you have at least a two-week supply of your diabetes pills and insulin.
- Follow the [sick day guidelines for people with diabetes](#).

Why you might be at higher risk

People with diabetes whose blood sugar levels are often higher than their target are more likely to have [related health problems](#). Those health problems can make it harder to overcome COVID-19.

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Hemoglobin Disorders

Hemoglobin disorders such as [sickle cell disease \(SCD\)](#) and [thalassemia](#) may put people at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

Actions to take

- Ask your healthcare provider about telemedicine or remote healthcare visits, and [emergency department](#).
- Work with your healthcare provider to manage [medications and therapies](#) for you, such as hydroxyurea, chelation therapy, blood transfusions, and prescriptions for pain management. Also, manage any other health condition you may have (such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and arthritis).
- Try to prevent vaso-occlusive episodes or pain crises by [avoiding possible triggers](#).
- Review our [healthy living with SCD guide](#) or our [healthy living with thalassemia guide](#) to help you live healthy.
- Find [SCD resources](#) and [thalassemia resources](#) to help navigate care and increase your knowledge of SCD and thalassemia.
- Let friends and family know about the need for [healthy blood donors](#).

Why you might be at higher risk

Living with a hemoglobin disorder can lead to serious multi-organ complications, and conditions (such as heart disease, liver disease, diabetes, iron overload, kidney disease, and a weakened immune system) may increase the risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

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Immunocompromised

Many conditions and treatments can cause a person to have a weakened immune system including [cancer](#) treatment, bone marrow or organ transplantation, immune deficiency, low white blood cell count or not on HIV treatment, and prolonged use of corticosteroids and other immune-suppressing medications.

Actions to take

- If you are immunocompromised, continue any recommended medications or treatments as directed by your healthcare provider.
- Call your healthcare provider if you have concerns about your condition or feel sick.

Why you might be at higher risk

People with a weakened immune system have reduced ability to fight infectious diseases like COVID-19. Knowledge is limited about the virus that causes COVID-19, but based on similar viruses, immunocompromised patients may remain infectious for longer than other COVID-19 patients.

Liver disease

Chronic liver disease, including cirrhosis, may increase risk for serious illness from COVID-19.

Actions to take

- Take your medications exactly as prescribed.

Why you might be at higher risk

Severe illness caused by COVID-19 and the medications used to treat some severe conditions can cause strain on the liver, particularly for those with underlying liver problems. People with liver disease can have a weakened immune system, leaving the body less able to fight COVID-19.

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People aged 65 years and older

Older adults, 65 years and older, are at higher risk for severe illness and death from CO

Actions to take

- Take your medications for any underlying health conditions exactly as prescribed.
- Follow the advice of your healthcare provider.
- Develop a [care plan](#) that summarizes your health conditions and current treatments
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Why you might be at higher risk

Although COVID-19 can affect any group, the older you are, the higher your risk of serio deaths reported in the U.S. have been in [adults 65 years or older](#); risk of death is highes older. The immune systems of older adults weaken with age, making it harder to fight c adults commonly have chronic diseases that can increase the risk of severe illness from

People who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility

Many cases of COVID-19 in the U.S. have occurred among older adults living in nursing facilities

Actions to take

- Carefully follow your facility's instructions for infection prevention.
- Notify staff right away if you feel sick.
- Ask your caretakers about the actions that are being taken at your nursing home or protect you and your loved ones, including if and how they are limiting visitors.

Why you might be at higher risk

The communal nature of nursing homes and long-term care facilities, and the populatic adults often with underlying medical conditions), put those living in nursing homes at h severe illness from COVID-19.

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Serious heart conditions

Serious [heart conditions](#), including heart failure, coronary artery disease, congenital heart disease, and pulmonary hypertension, may put people at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

Actions to take

- Take your medication exactly as prescribed. Continue angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors or angiotensin-II receptor blockers (ARB) as prescribed by your healthcare provider for heart failure or high blood pressure. This is recommended by [current clinical guidelines](#).
- Make sure that you have at least a two-week supply of your heart disease medication (including cholesterol and high blood pressure).
- People with hypertension should continue to manage and control their blood pressure as directed.

Why you might be at higher risk

COVID-19, like other viral illnesses such as the flu, can damage the respiratory system and the heart to work. For people with heart failure and other serious heart conditions this can worsen COVID-19 symptoms.

Severe obesity

Actions to take

- Take your medications for any underlying health conditions exactly as prescribed.

Why you might be at higher risk

Severe obesity increases the risk of a serious breathing problem called acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) which is a major complication of COVID-19 and can cause difficulties with a doctor's artificial lung support for seriously ill patients. People living with severe obesity can have multiple serious underlying health conditions that can increase the risk of severe illness from COVID-19.