



# County of Santa Cruz

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## HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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### Public Health Division

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## Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

These FAQs were updated on **March 19, 2020**. They will continue to be updated as the situation changes. Please check back for the latest information.

### What is happening?

We are experiencing a global outbreak of a new illness called novel coronavirus or COVID-19. While the illness started in China, it has spread throughout the world. (You can see the [current U.S. case count of COVID-19](#) here.) Because this virus is new, there is little to no pre-existing immunity to the virus, so it spreads quickly. On March 11, the COVID-19 outbreak was characterized as a pandemic by the World Health Organization.

### What is novel coronavirus (COVID 19)?

COVID-19 is not the same as the [coronaviruses that commonly circulate among humans](#) and cause mild illness, like the common cold. Reported illnesses have ranged from very mild to severe, including illness resulting in death. Older people and people of all ages with chronic medical conditions such as heart disease, lung disease and diabetes, seem to be at higher risk of developing serious COVID-19 illness.

### What is County of Santa Cruz Public Health Division doing?

The County of Santa Cruz Public Health Division has been working closely with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) as well as our state, regional and local partners to manage testing and monitoring of persons who have been exposed to COVID-19. County Public Health is planning for a sustained response and focused on reducing the impact of the disease, which includes advising all sectors of the community to take immediate steps to be prepared.

### Am I at risk of getting COVID-19 in the United States?

This is a rapidly evolving situation and the [risk assessment](#) may change daily. The latest updates are available on CDC's Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) website.

### How does COVID-19 spread?

Someone who is actively sick with COVID-19 can spread the illness to others. That is why the

CDC recommends that these patients be isolated either in the hospital or at home (depending on how sick they are) until they are better and no longer pose a risk of infecting others.

### **What does community spread mean?**

Community spread means people have been infected with the virus in an area – this includes individuals who are not sure how or where they became infected.

### **What are the symptoms?**

Symptoms may include fever, fatigue, cough, runny nose or shortness of breath. Some people may have pneumonia or more serious illness.

### **What does it mean to Shelter in Place?**

The County of Santa Cruz is currently under a Shelter in Place order to help stop the spread of COVID-19. Shelter in Place requires that people remain at home unless they are completing an essential activity such as getting food, visiting the doctor, or caring for a family member. Although these measures can cause disruption to the local economy and our daily lives, they are necessary to slow the spread of the virus and protect overall community health. See the [Shelter in Place guidelines](#) for more details.

### **How else can I protect myself and my family from getting COVID-19?**

1. Get your flu shot to protect against flu, which is now widespread and has symptoms like the ones for COVID-19.
2. Wash your hands with soap and water, rub for at least 20 seconds.
3. Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, sleeve or arm. **Do not use your hand.**
4. Stay home if you are sick with a fever, cough, shortness of breath and are feeling tired.
5. Follow the Shelter in Place guidelines available on this site.

### **Do I need to wear a mask?**

Healthy individuals do not need a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory illnesses. A facemask can be worn by those who are coughing or sneezing to protect others from getting sick. Surgical masks are already in short supply and should be prioritized for use in health care settings.

### **Should we avoid going to public events?**

Yes, under the Shelter in Place guidelines all public and private gatherings of any number of people are prohibited. If you must go out to complete Essential Activities, please practice social distancing and stay 6 feet away from other individuals. Do not go out if you are sick.

### **I'm sick. How do I know if it is coronavirus or something else, like the flu?**

Call your doctor if you feel sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, and have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19, or if you live in or have recently traveled from an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19. Your doctor will work with the local public health department to determine if you need to be tested for COVID-19. If you don't have a doctor, call 211 to find the closest safety net clinic.

### **Should we cancel travel plans?**

At this time, the CDC has issued a Level 3 travel advisory that recommends avoiding all nonessential travel to destinations with level 3 travel notices. CDC does not generally issue advisories or restrictions for travel within the United States. However, crowded travel settings, like airports, may increase chances of getting COVID-19. There are several things you should consider when deciding whether it is safe for you to travel.

- Is Covid-19 spreading in the area where you are going?
- Will you or your travel companion(s) be in close contact with others during your trip?
- Are you or your travel companion(s) more likely to get severe illness if you get COVID-19?

Depending on your circumstances, you may choose to delay or cancel your plans. If you do decide to travel, be sure to take steps to help prevent getting and spreading COVID-19 during travel. For the most up-to-date COVID-19 travel information, visit [CDC COVID-19 Travel page](#).

### **How should I prepare for a community spread of COVID-19 in Santa Cruz County?**

- Prepare for shortages of goods and supplies.
- Make sure family and organization emergency preparedness kits are up to date and ready to go. Stocking extra emergency supplies is a good idea.
- Prepare for shortages in medications. Try to obtain two to three months' supply of critical prescriptions.
- Create plans to care for loved ones at home if they or their caregivers become ill. Do so in a manner that limits spread within the family.
- Use a barrier, such as a paper towel or tissue, to touch common surfaces such as bathroom door handles or elevator buttons.

### **I'm feeling stressed and overwhelmed, who can I talk to?**

An anonymous crisis line is available 24 hours, 7 days a week including holidays at 1-800-704-0900 (Mental Health Services) and/or SAMHSA's Disaster Distress Helpline 24 hours at 1-800-985-5990 or text TALKWITHUS to 66746 (Press 2 for Spanish).