



County of Santa Cruz

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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Public Health Division

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

These FAQs were updated on **April 24, 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. (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?

Coronaviruses are thought to spread through the air by coughing/sneezing and close personal contact, or by touching contaminated objects or surfaces and then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes. Recent studies have found that even people without symptoms can carry the virus and spread it to others.

What does community spread mean?

Community spread means people have been infected with the virus in the area in which they live – 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. Even those without symptoms may have coronavirus and infect others.

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 FAQ on www.santacruzhealth.org/coronavirus for more details.

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

1. Wash your hands often with soap and water. Rub for at least 20 seconds.
2. Cover your cough and sneeze with a tissue, sleeve or arm. Do not use your hand.
3. Don't touch your face. Keep hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth.
4. Clean and disinfect things you touch often.
5. Stay 6 feet away from people outside your household.
6. Wear a face covering in public when coming into contact with people outside of your household.
7. If you are sick with a fever, cough or shortness of breath, stay home and stay away from other family members.
8. Follow the Shelter in Place guidelines available on this site.

Do I need to wear a face covering?

Yes, you are required to wear a face covering in public when coming into contact with people outside of your household. Wearing a face covering, when combined with physical distancing and frequent hand washing, may reduce the risk of transmitting coronavirus to others when in public and engaged in essential activities. Non-surgical masks and homemade or fabric masks are acceptable for the general public. Medical-grade masks should be saved for frontline

healthcare workers due to severe shortages. For more details, please see the Face Covering Order Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).

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 others. 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?

If you have a mild fever, cough or shortness of breath, stay home. Stay away from other family members. If symptoms worsen or you have trouble breathing, call your doctor. 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?

Yes. The Department of State advises U.S. citizens to avoid all international travel due to the global impact of COVID-19 and has issued a Level 4: Do Not Travel advisory. In countries where commercial departure options remain available, U.S. citizens who live in the United States should arrange for immediate return to the United States, unless they are prepared to remain abroad for an indefinite period. You can find the latest international travel information at www.travel.state.gov.

How should I prepare for an extended Shelter in Place period in Santa Cruz County?

- Make sure family and organization emergency preparedness kits are up to date.
- 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.
- Continue to buy normal quantities of food, toilet paper, and other necessary items. This will ensure that there is enough for everyone.

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 (Press 2 for Spanish). You can also text TALKWITHUS or HABLANOS to 66746.