

Florida Department of Health
Office of Minority Health and Health Equity Statement

People at Higher Risk for Severe Illness from COVID-19

COVID-19 is a new respiratory virus and there is limited information regarding risk factors for severe disease. Based on currently available information, older adults and people of any age who have serious chronic or underlying health conditions are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

For up-to-date data on race/ethnicity, please visit [FloridaHealthCOVID19.gov](https://www.floridahealth.gov/covid-19) and under the Current Situation in Florida section you will find:

- A daily report
- An online data dashboard that captures cases by county and ZIP code

Those who are at high-risk for severe illness from COVID-19 include:

- People ages 65 and older
- People with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma
- People who have serious heart conditions
- People who are immunocompromised. Many conditions can cause a person to be immunocompromised, including:
 - Cancer treatment
 - Smoking
 - Bone marrow or organ transplantation
 - Immune deficiencies
 - HIV or AIDS
 - Prolonged use of corticosteroids and other immune weakening medications
- People with severe obesity
- People with diabetes
- People with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis
- People with liver disease

Chronic conditions such as heart disease, diabetes and lung disease place people at higher risk for poor outcomes related to COVID-19. It is important for individuals and caregivers to manage chronic diseases during this pandemic, and in everyday life.

Prevention Strategies

In alignment with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Florida Department of Health recommends that people who are at higher risk of getting very sick from COVID-19 prepare and protect themselves by:

- Practicing social distancing and staying home when you can. This includes staying at home when you are sick.
- Avoiding crowds, cruise travel and non-essential travel.
- If you are around other people, avoiding groups or crowds of 10 or more people and maintain 6 feet of separation.
- Washing your hands frequently and for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth.

- Covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throwing it in the trash. If you do not have a tissue, use your sleeve or elbow, but not your hands.
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Using telemedicine/telehealth options for regular medical visits.
- Taking regular medications on time and as directed. Reach out to your health care provider and ask about obtaining an extra supply of medications in case you cannot get to the pharmacy or clinic.
- Keeping up the healthy habits that your doctor recommends, including healthy eating, exercise, getting enough sleep, quitting smoking and managing chronic or underlying health conditions.

Office of Minority Health and Health Equity

The Florida Department of Health, Office of Minority Health and Health Equity is committed to promoting culturally and linguistically appropriate services that ensure the needs of minority communities are integrated and addressed within health-related programs across the state. This mission is operationalized by:

- Monitoring and reporting on the health status of Florida's vulnerable populations and the effectiveness of health protection programs.
- Initiating and maintaining strategic partnerships with governmental and non-governmental agencies to advance the science, practice and workforce in eliminating health disparities, primarily through its Closing the Gap Program.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the office is working with partners, stakeholders and communities to provide resources and information needed to effectively respond at the local level. Activities include:

- Disseminating COVID-19 messaging to Closing the Gap grantees.
- Sharing resources in response to the needs identified by partners.

Resources

- The COVID-19 call center is available 24/7 at 1-866-779-6121 in English, Español and Kreyól Ayisyen.
- [Florida Health COVID-19](#) provides up-to-date information on COVID-19 in Florida and is available in English, Español and Kreyól Ayisyen.
- Florida Department of Health, [Office of Minority Health and Health Equity](#).
- Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Chronic Disease Prevention is available for assistance at 850-245-4330 or Chronic.HSFCD@flhealth.gov.
- The [Insulin Distribution Program](#) at the Florida Department of Health is a safety-net program for when no other resources are available for insulin.
- Call toll-free 211 or visit [211](#) for a free, 24/7, confidential helpline and website that connects people to essential health and human services.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [People Who Need to Take Extra Precautions](#) and [How to Protect Yourself and Others](#).
- [Tobacco Free Florida](#) for more information on Quit Your Way services.
- The Florida Blue Mental Health Helpline is free and available 24/7 in English and Spanish at 833-848-1762.