American Indian and Alaska Native Populations At-Risk for Severe COVID-19 Disease

Increased Risk for Severe Illness

• Some people are more likely than others to become severely ill.
• Severe illness means that a person with COVID-19 may need: hospitalization, intensive care, a ventilator to help them breathe, or they may even die.

• People at increased risk, and those who live or visit with them, need to take precautions to protect themselves from getting COVID-19.

American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/ANs) have a higher prevalence of the following conditions that put them at greater risk for severe illness from COVID-19:

• Chronic lung disease (such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or moderate to severe asthma)
• Heart disease (including such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, or cardiomyopathies)
• Cancer
• Diabetes
• Obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 30 or higher but less than 40)
• Severe Obesity (BMI of 40 or higher)
• Chronic kidney disease
• Liver disease
• HIV
• Pregnancy
• Smoking status
• Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from solid organ transplant

Older adults (ages 65+) and those with sickle cell disease are also at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

For more information, or to learn more about frequently asked questions, visit the CDC website.


Tips for Keeping Yourself and Others Safe

• Limit contact with other people outside your household as much as possible
• Wash your hands often for at least 20 seconds
• Practice physical distancing and avoid close contact (6 feet, or two arms lengths) with others outside of your household
• Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces
• Avoid all unnecessary travel
• Get your COVID-19 vaccine if you are able and have yet to get it
  • The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommends a booster for the Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson (J&J) COVID-19 vaccines
  • First boosters are recommended for those ages five or older, if you received your second dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine at least five months ago or if you completed your primary dose of the J&J COVID-19 vaccine at least two months ago
  • Second boosters of either Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine at least four months after your first booster are recommended for those ages 50 years and older, or 12 years of age or older if moderately or severely immunocompromised
  • Wear a mask indoors in public if you are in an area of substantial or high transmission.
  • Avoid crowds and poorly ventilated spaces.
  • Cover coughs and sneezes, and ask those around you to do the same.
  • Monitor your health daily and be alert for symptoms such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, or other COVID-19 symptoms.
  • If you are feeling sick, separate yourself from others whenever possible, follow care instructions from your doctor or Tribal healthcare provider, and get tested for COVID-19

You should always check with your doctor or Tribal healthcare provider to determine if you fall into the high-risk category or if you have any other COVID-19 questions.