

COVID-19: FAQ for Residential Buildings

This document provides answers for residential building owners and managers to frequently asked questions about COVID-19. For updated COVID-19 information, visit nyc.gov/health/coronavirus.

Many New Yorkers are eligible for COVID-19 vaccination. COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. Getting vaccinated is the most important way to protect yourself from severe COVID-19 illness, hospitalization and death. For information on COVID-19 vaccines, visit nyc.gov/covidvaccine. For a full list of eligible groups, visit nyc.gov/covidvaccinedistribution. If you are eligible, visit vaccinefinder.nyc.gov to find a vaccination site and make an appointment. If you need assistance making an appointment at a City-run vaccination site, call 877-VAX-4NYC (877-829-4692).

Remember to perform these four actions to prevent COVID-19 transmission — even if you, your employees or residents have received a COVID-19 vaccine:

- **Stay home if sick:** Monitor your health and stay home if you are sick except for getting essential medical care (including [COVID-19 testing](#)) and other essential needs.
- **Keep physical distance:** Stay at least 6 feet away from people.
- **Wear a face covering:** Protect yourself and those around you. You can be contagious without symptoms and spread the disease when you cough, sneeze, talk or breathe. Face coverings help reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- **Keep your hands clean and follow cleaning protocols:** Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available; clean frequently touched surfaces regularly; avoid touching your face with unwashed hands; and cover your cough or sneeze with your sleeve, not your hands.

Cases of COVID-19 Among Residents and Staff

For information on health screenings and how to handle possible cases of COVID-19 among building staff, see [COVID-19 Cases in the Workplace: What Employers Need to Know](#).

What if building staff have COVID-19 or were exposed?

Remind staff to stay home if they have symptoms of or test positive for COVID-19, were recently exposed to someone with COVID-19, or are subject to [NYS Travel quarantine](#). Offer paid leave and flexible leave policies to help ensure staff stay home as necessary. Consider finding backup staff or asking resident volunteers to help with tasks, such as package delivery and routine cleaning and disinfecting. Make sure to provide any temporary workers with instructions on physical distancing, face coverings, and other COVID-19 safety measures.

Should building management notify public health officials if they become aware that a resident has COVID-19?

No. If you become aware that a resident has COVID-19, there is no need to report this to health officials.

Will the City notify building owners or residents if a resident is sick or tests positive for COVID-19?

No. The NYC Health Department will not notify building owners or other residents if a resident is sick or tests positive for COVID-19. The [NYC Test & Trace Corps](#) will attempt to interview all people diagnosed with COVID-19 to identify close contacts who were potentially exposed. If building staff or residents are identified as possible close contacts, they will be contacted by the Test & Trace Corps.

Physical Distancing and Face Coverings

Do building staff have to practice physical distancing at work?

Yes, building staff must practice physical distancing, including keeping at least 6 feet away from others whenever possible. To avoid crowding, limit the number of people allowed in elevators and other common areas (such as a laundry room) at the same time. Encourage people only to ride the elevator with their own party, take the stairs or wait for the next elevator.

Are building staff required to wear face coverings at work?

Building staff must wear face coverings if they cannot maintain at least 6 feet of distance between themselves and others. Staff members should have a face covering ready to put on in case someone comes within 6 feet. You may require staff to wear face coverings even when 6 feet of distance can be maintained.

Consider the following in choosing a face covering:

- Wear a face covering that snugly covers your nose and mouth, without slipping.
- Do not use a face covering with an exhalation valve as it allows unfiltered, exhaled air to escape.
- Use a face covering with two or three layers of tightly woven fabric to better prevent unfiltered air from passing through.
- Wearing two face coverings (a cloth face covering over a disposable mask) can provide additional protection by increasing the number of layers of material and making for a snugger fit. See the NYC Health Department's guidance on [How to Wear Two Face Coverings](#). Workers can also consider using a higher-grade mask, like a KN95 mask.

For more information on face coverings, including appropriate types of face coverings, visit nyc.gov/health/coronavirus and look for the **Face Coverings FAQ**.

Are building residents and visitors required to wear face coverings?

Building residents and visitors should be required or strongly encouraged to wear face coverings whenever they are outside of their apartment, such as in hallways, lobbies, laundry rooms, elevators and stairwells. Everyone must wear a face covering when outside of their apartment if 6 feet of distance cannot be maintained (except for children under age two and people who cannot medically tolerate a face covering).

Does building management need to provide face coverings for building staff?

Yes. Building management must provide face coverings at no cost to the building staff and should make sure to maintain an adequate supply. Management can allow staff to bring and wear their own face coverings if the face coverings meet minimum standards.

If building staff are wearing face coverings, do they need to maintain 6 feet of distance between themselves and others?

Yes. The use of face coverings does not take the place of physical distancing. Building staff must stay at least 6 feet apart from others whenever possible.

Hand Hygiene and Cleaning Protocols

What can building owners, managers and maintenance staff do to promote healthy hand hygiene?

- Make sure that handwashing sinks in common areas have clean running water, soap and paper towels at all times.
- Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol in common areas (for example, lobbies, bathrooms, laundry rooms, entrances and exits, and elevators) and to staff to encourage healthy hand hygiene among building occupants.
- Put up handwashing posters in bathrooms and other common areas. Visit nyc.gov/health/coronavirus and search for [Posters and Flyers](#) to find the “Wash Your Hands Poster for Adults,” available in multiple languages.

How often should building staff clean common spaces, such as the lobby, shared restrooms or laundry rooms?

- Building maintenance staff should conduct regular cleaning and disinfecting at least every day.
 - Shared objects (such as tools) and high-touch surfaces (such as door handles, stairway railings, elevator buttons, light switches, reception desks, hopper doors, push and pull plates, mailboxes, and equipment), in high-transit areas or shared spaces (such as restrooms, lobbies, elevators, laundry rooms and mailrooms) should be cleaned and disinfected more frequently.
- See [General Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfection for Non-Health Care Settings](#) at nyc.gov/health/coronavirus for more information on how to clean and disinfect surfaces, sanitize cleaning tools such as mops and cloths, and access a sample cleaning log to support compliance with NYC and NYS requirements.

General Building Operations

Can the ventilation system transmit COVID-19? What steps can I take to protect building staff and others?

Current evidence is limited and does not suggest that air entering a ventilation system will transmit COVID-19. However, strong air movement across spaces from air conditioning units, supply air ducts, or fans (personal or room fans) may move droplets beyond 6 feet.

Take these steps to improve ventilation, as appropriate for your space:

- **Bring in outdoor air to increase airflow.**
 - Open windows and doors as much as possible.
 - Make sure open windows are not a fall hazard — install window guards as appropriate.
 - Use ceiling fans and window fans to promote ventilation.
- **Increase total airflow supply to occupied spaces if possible.**
 - If present, ensure exhaust fans in bathrooms and kitchens in apartments are functional and operating at full capacity.
 - If a mechanical heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system is present, maximize the amount of outside air that is delivered to spaces, with consideration to maintaining comfortable indoor temperatures.
 - If present, disable demand-control ventilation (DCV), which automatically controls and may stop air supply based on temperature, occupancy or other indoor conditions.
 - If unable to get enough fresh air into a room, consider using a HEPA air purifier or air cleaner that is appropriate for the room size. Avoid using air purifiers that release ozone or other chemical irritants into the air. For more information, see [EPA Information About Ozone Generators](#).
- **If the building has an HVAC system, filter the air to help trap virus particles.**
 - Improve central air filtration as much as possible without significantly reducing design airflow. MERV 13 or 14 filters are recommended when possible.
 - Inspect filter housing and racks to ensure appropriate filter fit and check for ways to minimize filter bypass.
- **Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to see [Improving Ventilation in Your Home](#) and [Ventilation in Buildings](#) for more information on how to prevent virus particles from accumulating in the air.** Note that by itself, air cleaning or filtration is not enough to protect people from exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19. Continue to follow the **four actions to prevent COVID-19 transmission** listed at the start of this document. When used along with these actions and other best practices, filtration can be part of a plan to help prevent virus particles from accumulating in indoor air.

Can the COVID-19 virus spread through pools and hot tubs?

There is no evidence that COVID-19 can be spread to people through pools and hot tubs. Proper operation, maintenance and disinfection (such as with chlorine and bromine) of pools and hot tubs should remove or inactivate the virus that causes COVID-19. See [Guidance for Pool Operators](#).

Should building deliveries (such as packages and food deliveries) be handled differently?

Building occupants (staff and residents) should maintain physical distancing when getting packages, mail, and entering or exiting the building. In a large residential building where packages are left in the lobby, building staff may consider helping residents by leaving deliveries outside their apartment door.

Some delivery services (for example, Uber Eats, FreshDirect and Amazon) also have an online section for “special instructions” where people can enter more information and request, for example, that packages be delivered to their door, or to text or call and leave the packages at the door, in an effort to minimize person-to-person contact and touching of surfaces. Inform residents of any special instructions they should include in their orders to restaurant and other delivery services to encourage physical distancing and minimize contact with others.

What should occupants do if there is a fire alarm in the building?

Building occupants should follow the building’s standard protocols if there is a fire alarm, and fire safety should not be compromised. Fire and building codes should continue to be followed and fire doors should not be propped open. Encourage building occupants to maintain at least 6 feet of distance from each other as they exit the building during such an incident.

What if repairs are needed in a specific unit (for example, plumbing or maintenance)?

Building residents and workers should follow preventive actions, such as healthy hand hygiene and maintaining physical distancing while the work is being done. Residents and workers must also wear face coverings. Workers should ask residents to wait in a different area of the apartment than that being repaired, to the extent possible. Clean and disinfect work areas afterward (see [General Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfection for Non-Health Care Settings](https://www.nyc.gov/health/coronavirus) at [nyc.gov/health/coronavirus](https://www.nyc.gov/health/coronavirus) for more information on how to clean and disinfect surfaces).

How else can residential building owners and property managers help residents stay healthy and reduce feelings of isolation during this time?

If building staff are able, consider checking in with residents by phone or text (not in person), especially older adults and others who may require additional assistance.

Resources

- For more information about COVID-19, visit [nyc.gov/health/coronavirus](https://www.nyc.gov/health/coronavirus) and [cdc.gov/covid19](https://www.cdc.gov/covid19).
- For real-time updates, text “COVID” to 692-692. Message and data rates may apply.
- If you need a health care provider, NYC Health + Hospitals welcomes all New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status or ability to pay. Visit nychealthandhospitals.org for more information and to search for a health care provider, or call 844-NYC-4NYC (844-692-4692) or **311**.
- Visit [nyc.gov/covidtest](https://www.nyc.gov/covidtest) or call **311** to find a COVID-19 testing site near you. Many sites offer free testing.

The NYC Health Department may change recommendations as the situation evolves.

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