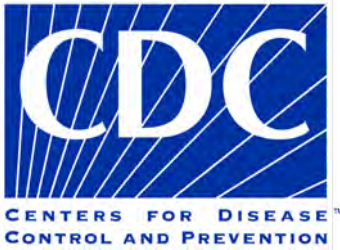




*Easy Read Edition*

# **What do the CDC's new COVID-19 Community Levels mean for me?**

# Words to Know in this Fact Sheet



## CDC

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The CDC is a part of the government. They tell people what to do to stay safe from COVID-19.



## Community transmission

How many cases of COVID-19 there are in a place.



## COVID-19 Community Levels

A way of measuring COVID-19 risk in a place. The CDC decides a county's COVID-19 Community Level based on how many COVID-19 cases there are in the county and whether the hospitals in the county are crowded with sick people who have COVID-19.

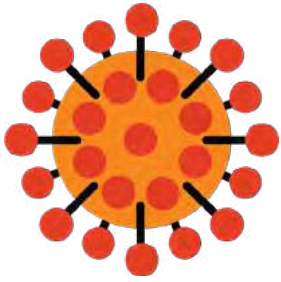


## Ventilator

A machine that helps you breathe

# What is COVID-19?

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COVID-19 is a bad disease.



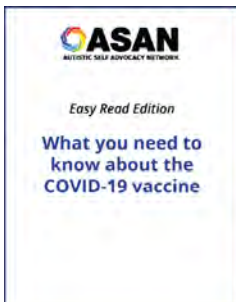
It makes people very sick.



COVID-19 has spread around the world.



COVID-19 is still spreading.



You can learn more about COVID-19 by reading [our fact sheet on the COVID-19 vaccine](#).

# Why do hospitals fill up during COVID-19?

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If you get very sick with COVID-19, you should go to the hospital.



Hospitals can run out of space.



If many people have COVID-19, the hospital can get full.



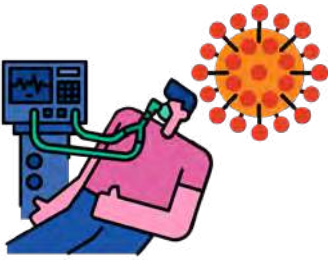
Then, there is no space for more people with COVID-19.



There is no space for people who are sick with something else.



This is a problem!



Some people with COVID-19 need a ventilator.



A **ventilator** is a machine that helps you breathe.



Hospitals can run out of ventilators.



Then, they can't help any more people who need ventilators.

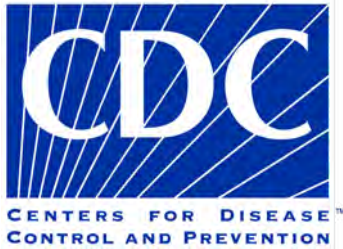


When hospitals fill up because of COVID-19, people don't get the help they need.



# What is community transmission?

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The **CDC** is the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



The CDC is a part of the government.



They tell people what to do to stay safe from COVID-19.



The CDC measures **community transmission** of COVID-19.



Community transmission means how many cases of COVID-19 there are in a place.



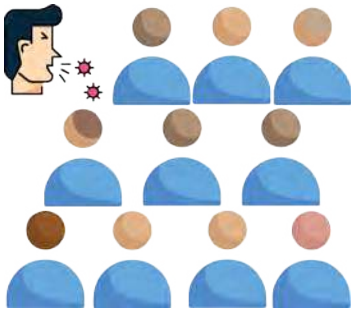
If community transmission is high in your area, that means you have a high risk of catching COVID-19.



The CDC says that community transmission is high when 1 or more out of every thousand people in a place has COVID-19.



1 out of every thousand people might not sound like a lot.



But remember, COVID-19 spreads very fast.



If one out of every thousand people in a place has a bad disease like COVID-19, that is bad news.

# What are COVID-19 Community Levels?

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The CDC used to talk about how many COVID-19 cases a place had.



They used those numbers to tell people how to stay safe.

For example



Let's say a place had a lot of COVID-19 cases.



The CDC used to say that people in that place should wear masks inside.



In February 2022, the CDC started using a new way to talk about risk from COVID-19.



They made a new tool called **COVID-19 Community Levels**.

## Your COVID-19 Community Level can be:



- Low.



- Medium.



- High.

The CDC decides each county's COVID-19 Community Level based on:



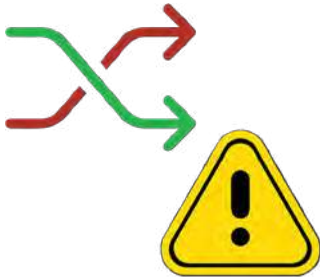
- How many COVID-19 cases there are in the county



- Whether the hospitals in the county are crowded with sick people who have COVID-19.



In the COVID-19 Community Levels tool, a county can have up to 2 COVID-19 cases out of every thousand people and still be “Low.”



This is different from the risk of getting COVID-19.



If a place has 1 or more COVID-19 cases out of every thousand people, the risk of getting COVID-19 is high.



A low COVID-19 Community Level means that:



- Less than 2 out of every thousand people have COVID-19, AND



- The hospitals in your county are not crowded with people who have COVID-19.



A medium COVID-19 Community Level can mean 2 things.

Medium can mean that:



- Less than 2 out of every thousand people have COVID-19, BUT



- The hospitals in your county are crowded with people who have COVID-19.

OR medium can mean that:



- More than 2 out of every thousand people have COVID-19, BUT



- The hospitals in your county are not crowded with people who have COVID-19.

A high COVID-19 Community Level means that:



- More than 2 out of every thousand people have COVID-19, AND



- The hospitals in your county are crowded with people who have COVID-19.

	Hospitals are <b>not</b> crowded	Hospitals <b>are</b> crowded
<b>Less</b> than 2 out of every thousand people have COVID-19	Low	Medium
<b>More</b> than 2 out of every thousand people have COVID-19	Medium	High



COVID-19 Community Levels are mostly about whether or not hospitals are crowded.



The CDC uses COVID-19 Community Levels to tell people what they should do.

For example:



The CDC says to wear a mask inside if your county's COVID-19 Community Level is high.

# If my county's Community Level is low or medium, am I safe from COVID-19?

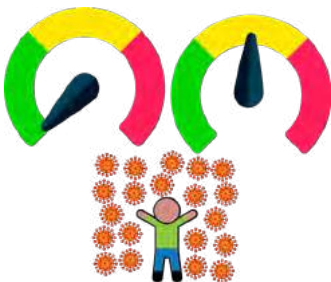
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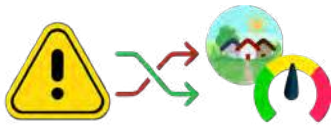
Your county's COVID-19 Community Level does not tell you much about your risk of catching COVID-19.



Even in places with low COVID-19 Community Levels, people still get sick with COVID-19.



You can still catch COVID-19 even if your county's COVID-19 Community Level is low or medium.



Remember, “high” and “low” mean different things for your risk of getting COVID-19 than for COVID-19 Community Levels.



A place can have a low COVID-19 Community Level, but a high risk of catching COVID-19.



For example:



Normaltown has a lot of hospital beds.



Many people in Normaltown have COVID-19.



1 out of every thousand people in Normaltown has COVID-19.



If you are in Normaltown, your risk of getting COVID-19 is high.



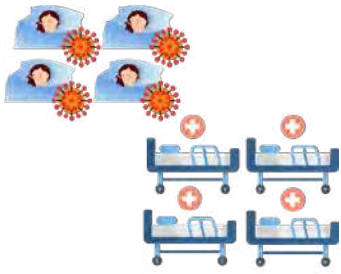
Hospitals in Normaltown are not crowded.



So Normaltown's Community Level is low.



But there are still a lot of people with COVID-19!



Some places have a lot of hospital beds, but also have a lot of people sick with COVID-19.



The CDC used to talk about how places like that have a high risk of COVID-19.



Now, the CDC says that places like that have low COVID-19 Community Levels.



The number of people with COVID-19 did not change.

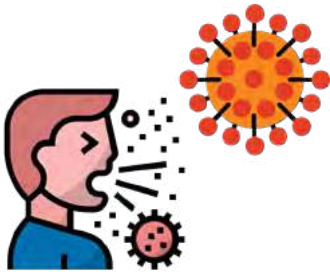
The risk did not change.



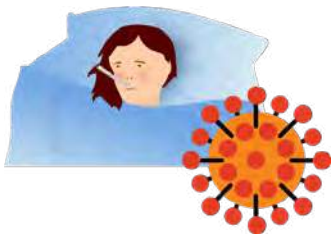
The CDC just changed how they talk about those places.



Changing how we talk about COVID-19 does not make things safer.



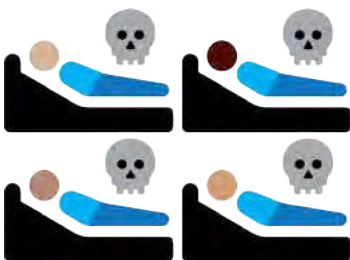
COVID-19 is still spreading.



People are still getting COVID-19.



People are still going to the hospital.



People are still dying from COVID-19.

# When should I wear a mask?

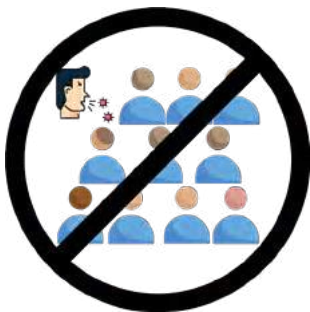
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You still should wear a mask if you can.



We have to wear masks *before* the hospitals get full.



Then, we can stop COVID-19 from spreading.



If we stop COVID-19 from spreading, hospitals won't fill up.



If we start wearing masks *after* the hospitals are full, that doesn't help as much.



So you should still wear a mask if you can.



You should wear a mask when you're in public places, like a grocery store or bank.



You should wear a mask on planes, buses or trains.



Wearing a mask keeps you safer from COVID-19.



You can learn more about masks by reading [our fact sheet on masks](#).



# What else should I do to stay safe?

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If you have not had your COVID-19 vaccines, you should get vaccinated.



You can ask your doctor about getting vaccinated.



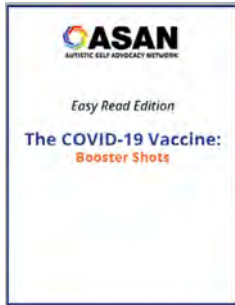
You can also go to [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov).



That is a website that will help you find a place to get vaccinated.



If you have not had your COVID-19 booster, you should get the booster.



Learn more about boosters in [our factsheet on boosters](#).

And you should also continue doing the things you were doing before:



- Keep wearing a mask.



- Keep staying home if you can.



- Keep washing your hands.

## To Learn More

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1

CDC: Many healthy Americans can take a break from masks (AP News): <https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-science-health-centers-for-disease-control-and-prevention-87d7bdc811ba6521e32017072d5ea180>

2

Know Your COVID-19 Community Level (CDC): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html>