

Respiratory Virus Quick Reference Guidance for Prisons, Detention Centers, and Homeless Service Sites

This guidance answers some of the most common questions when responding to respiratory viruses including COVID-19, influenza, and RSV in correctional and detention settings and homeless service sites.

- Comprehensive guidance is available from the [CDC: Respiratory Virus Guidance \(www.cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/guidance/\)](https://www.cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/guidance/).

This guidance applies to community settings, including non-health care portions of correctional and detention facilities and non-health care portions of shelters for people experiencing homelessness.

- Health care workers who provide care in these settings should refer to [CDC: Interim Guidance for Managing Healthcare Personnel with SARS-CoV-2 Infection or Exposure to SARS-CoV-2 \(www.cdc.gov/covid/hcp/infection-control/guidance-risk-assesment-hcp.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/covid/hcp/infection-control/guidance-risk-assesment-hcp.html).

COVID-19, influenza, and RSV may spread in the community at the same time making it difficult to know what virus is making people sick. In addition to testing, facilities may find it helpful to review the following data to stay informed about what viruses are circulating in the community at any given time.

- [Viral Respiratory Illness in Minnesota \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/respiratory/stats/index.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/respiratory/stats/index.html)
- [CDC: Respiratory Virus Activity Levels \(www.cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/data-research/dashboard/activity-levels.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/data-research/dashboard/activity-levels.html)
- This guidance does not apply to individuals suspected of having [Tuberculosis \(TB\) \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/tb\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/tb). Any person suspected of having TB disease should immediately be placed in airborne isolation and medically evaluated for TB.

If someone has viral respiratory symptoms

Step 1. Stay away from others

People with viral respiratory symptoms including, but not limited to, fever, chills, fatigue, cough, runny nose, or headache should:

- Stay in their room or cell and away from others **until both of the following are true** for at least 24 hours:
 - Symptoms are better overall.
 - They have not had a fever (and are not using fever-reducing medication).

- After returning to normal activities, they should take additional precautions for the **next five days** including wearing a **mask**, improving **ventilation**, practicing **physical distancing**, and practicing good **hygiene**. Even if someone is feeling better, they may still be able to spread the virus to others.
 - If someone tests positive for COVID-19 and is asymptomatic, they have already met the criteria for returning to normal activities and should move to taking additional precautions for the next five days.

Step 2. Test people who would benefit from treatment.

- Test clients and residents with symptoms of respiratory illness who would benefit from treatment for influenza or COVID-19. This includes people with [CDC Risk Factors for Severe Illness from Respiratory Viruses \(www.cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/risk-factors/index.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/risk-factors/index.html). Treatment must be started within a few days after symptoms begin.
- Consider testing for COVID-19, influenza, or RSV based on known exposures and disease prevalence in the community, visit: [Viral Respiratory Illness in Minnesota \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/respiratory/stats/index.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/respiratory/stats/index.html).

Step 3. Treat to prevent severe illness.

- Offer or facilitate access to treatment for COVID-19 and influenza to people who may benefit from medications including people with risk factors for severe illness.
 - Treatment works best when started within a few days of when symptoms begin.

Step 4. Report positive COVID-19 test results to MDH.

- Report positive COVID-19 test results from facility-administered tests to the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) within one working day through [SimpleReport \(www.simplereport.gov\)](https://www.simplereport.gov).
 - If the test was collected by a contracted vendor or sent to a laboratory for processing (e.g., PCR test), work with the contracting lab or testing vendor to make sure positive results get reported to MDH.
- Report any outbreak or unusual cluster of COVID-19 cases or any death in a staff person, client, or resident suspected to have died due to COVID-19 through REDCap, [COVID-19 Outbreak and Death Reporting Form for Shelters and Correctional Facilities \(https://redcap.health.state.mn.us/redcap/surveys/?s=WDCFYJD3YD34X83J\)](https://redcap.health.state.mn.us/redcap/surveys/?s=WDCFYJD3YD34X83J).

Prevention strategies

All facilities should implement the core prevention strategies below to protect staff and people in their care and custody from the health risks of respiratory viruses.

Core strategies should be in place at all times.

Additional prevention strategies may be layered on to core strategies when:

- Respiratory viruses are causing a lot of illness in your facility or community.
- Multiple people in the facility were recently exposed to a respiratory virus, are sick, or are recovering.
- You have people in the facility who are at high risk of severe illness.

Core strategies

- Encourage and enable staff, clients, volunteers, and residents to stay up to date on **immunizations**.
- Regularly **clean and disinfect** frequently touched surfaces.
- Provide supplies for hand hygiene, cleaning, and disinfection, at no cost to clients, residents, and staff and encourage them to **practice good hygiene**.
- Take steps for **cleaner air**. Ensure HVAC systems operate properly and provide acceptable indoor air quality.
- Provide or facilitate access to health care and **treatment** for respiratory illness.
- Provide spaces for people with respiratory illness to stay away from others to prevent spread.
- Have **masks** available for clients and staff who choose to wear a mask for additional protection.

Additional prevention strategies

- Provide free, high-quality masks to staff, clients, residents, and visitors in times of higher respiratory viral activity.
- Encourage physical distancing between people who are sick or recovering from respiratory illness and other people in the facility.
- Test clients and residents who are sick or recovering from respiratory illness. In addition to informing treatment decisions, facilities can use information from testing to make decisions about when people who have been sick can return to congregate spaces.

In case of outbreaks

- Layer as many core and additional prevention strategies as possible and/or strengthen adherence to core strategies.
- Consult with local, state, or tribal public health if you encounter a difficult situation and need assistance. Contact the Highly Impacted Settings team at Health.R-Congregate@state.mn.us for more information.

Minnesota Department of Health
625 Robert Street North
St. Paul, MN 55164-0975
www.health.state.mn.us

08/6/24

To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-5414.