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# **COVID-19 Plain Language Guidance for Employees with Developmental Disabilities**

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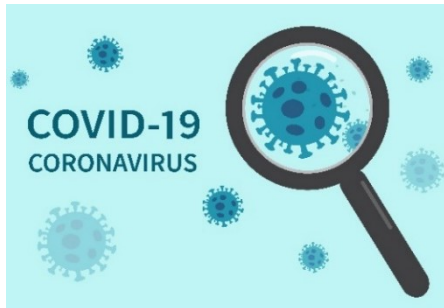
OSHA means the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. This government office makes rules to keep people safe and healthy at work. OSHA has rules that will protect workers from COVID-19. This booklet uses plain language to describe many of those rules. It includes information and tools to use to make a decision about going out in public during the COVID-19 outbreak.

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# General Information About COVID-19

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## What is COVID-19?



It is a short way of saying Coronavirus Disease 2019. It's nickname is Coronavirus. It is a disease that causes problems in the lungs. It spreads from one person to another person.

## How Do You Get It?



Someone with COVID-19 gives you, their germs. You cannot see the germs. By breathing close to you their germs get in the air, on you, and on things.

- Germs get into your body through your mouth, nose, and your eyes. This is the main way to get COVID-19.
- Some people who have COVID-19 do not show it. They can still get you sick.
- If you touch something with germs on it and then touch your face, you might get sick. This is a less likely way to get COVID-19.



## Signs and Symptoms of COVID-19

Some people who have COVID-19 do not show it. They might not even know they are sick. Some signs or symptoms include:



Fever  
or chills



Cough or  
Sore throat



Hard time  
breathing



Lose your sense  
of taste or smell



Runny nose



Tired, your whole  
body feels weak



Headache, muscle  
or body aches



An upset stomach,  
nausea or diarrhea

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If you are having symptoms call your doctor. If it is an emergency, call 911 or go to the hospital. You can find a full list of symptoms at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

## If you Have Been Exposed to COVID-19 and Are Sick

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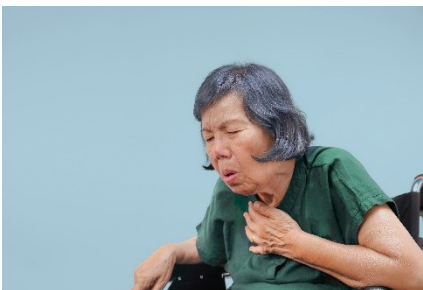
### Call your doctor.

- Do not go to your doctor's office unless your doctor tells you to go to the office.
  - Do not go to the hospital unless your doctor tells you to go to the hospital.
- 



Tell your doctor if you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19. Describe how you are feeling. Describe your symptoms.

Tell your doctor if you have been to a place or an event where people were sick with COVID-19.



If you are having trouble breathing, call 911. For all medical emergencies, call 911.

## Finding Out if You Have COVID-19 and Getting Treatment



Your doctor will decide if you should be tested for COVID-19.



As of October 2020, there is no vaccine.

There are no approved medicines for COVID-19.

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Many people have no symptoms and do not get very sick. Some people who get COVID-19 become very ill and need to go to a hospital.

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**Know your rights.** People with disabilities are allowed to bring a supporter with them when in a hospital or a doctor's office.

To see a video made by self-advocates about your rights go to:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9y1rOWyf\\_XM&t=6s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9y1rOWyf_XM&t=6s)

# COVID-19 Information for Employees

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Your employer should have a plan to protect you from getting COVID-19.

Talk to your employer. Ask for a copy of their plan. Get support to understand it. The plan must include:



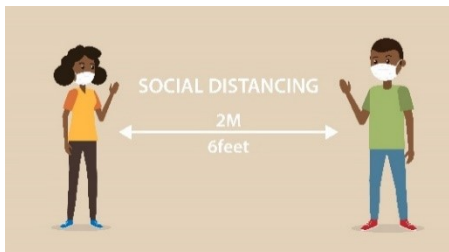
Ways to make the workplace safer (For example: adding **plastic shields between workstations**, moving workstations further apart from each other)

**Wearing a mask** and other face coverings.

[Click here for more details](#)



**Personal Protective Equipment** - People may use gloves, a face mask, goggles or glasses to keep germs out of their body.



**Social distancing** or keeping people 6 feet away from each other. 6 feet (2 meters) away is about the length of a bed. Look at the person and make sure a bed would fit between you. If you work inside, open doors and windows. Your employer will tell you how many people can be in the room.



**You should stay home from work if you have any of the signs or symptoms listed on page 4.**

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If you were tested and you have COVID-19 you should not be at work. Some people who have COVID-19 do not feel sick. If you had contact with anyone who has been told they have COVID-19 you must stay home and isolate from others for 10 days.

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## Hand Washing and Hand Sanitizing

Washing your hands is one of the best ways to keep from getting sick.

**Hand Washing Video** at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d914EnpU4Fo>

Do these 5 steps every time:



1. Wet your hands with clean, running water. It can be cold or warm. Next turn off the water. Put soap on your hands.
2. Rub your hands together. Get soap all over your hands (on the back of your hands, between your fingers and under your nails).
3. Keep rubbing and scrubbing your hands for 20 seconds. It helps to hum the “Happy Birthday” song. Hum it 2 times.
4. Rinse your hands with clean running water.
5. Dry your hands in the air or with a clean towel.

## Masks and Face Coverings



Wear a cloth face covering at work and in public. It is an important way to protect others from getting COVID-19. Employees must wear face coverings over their nose and mouth when around others. Some stores are using a clear plastic shield to protect cashiers.

### For all workers:

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- Wash your hands often
  - Wear a cloth mask
  - Cough or sneeze into your elbow or a tissue & throw it away
  - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth
  - Stay away from people who are sick
  - If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer
- 

## Rules At Work During COVID-19

You may be screened before you start working each day. The rules for screening are from your state health department. It could mean:



- Having your temperature checked
- Asking if you have a fever, cough, and/or difficulty breathing, or other symptoms
- Asking if you have been in contact with anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19.



## Eating lunch and taking a break



Many break rooms and cafeterias are closed. You may be asked to eat lunch or take a break in the same place where you work. Sometimes where we work is not a safe place to eat a meal.

Your employer will find a safe place for you to eat and take a break. During the COVID-19 emergency, please follow these safety rules:



- Look for a sign saying how many people can be in the area. It will remind you to stay 6 feet apart. It will tell you the rules for cleaning and hand washing.



- There must be a place to wash your hands where you enter the room or area to eat. It may be a hand sanitizer.



- Employees may be required to wipe down their area before they leave. Your employer will make sure to clean the area throughout the day.

## Transportation



**Cars** - No more than 2 people should be in a vehicle when working. You should wear face coverings while riding together.



**Public Transit** – If you take a bus or train to work:

- wear a mask
- avoid touching surfaces
- practice social distancing
- wash your hands as soon as get to your destination

## Tools and equipment must be cleaned & sanitized often.

Your employer will tell you the rules for cleaning tools and equipment. If it is your job to clean, your employer will show you how to clean. They will give you the cleaning supplies. They will tell you how often you need to clean tools and equipment.



## Respirators

Some workers use respirators. A respirator is a tight-fitting mask. It keeps out smoke, dust, and germs or viruses. It is one kind of personal protective equipment.

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There is a test to make sure it fits correctly. Make sure your employer has a plan to check your mask to see if it fits.

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## The Risks of Getting the Virus at Work



### BE INFORMED:

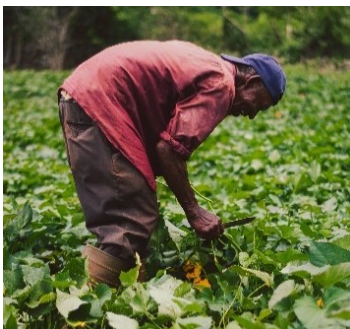
#### Know Your Risk During COVID-19

*On a scale of 1 to 10, how risky is...*



The chance of you getting COVID-19 at work depends on the type of job you have. It also depends on the number of cases of COVID-19 in your community. Doctors in Texas made a [chart](#) to use when deciding where to go. It ranks activities and places in the community from 1 to 9 based on your chance of getting COVID-19. This chart is also available in [Spanish](#).

## Examples of jobs with a Low Risk of Getting COVID-19



- Working in a small office with no contact with the public.
- Working from home.
- Working outside.
- Jobs that do not require a person to be within 6 feet of coworkers or the public.

**Examples of jobs with a moderate risk of getting COVID-19 include working at a:**



- Stores or a shopping mall
- A hotel or library
- A school or large office building open to the public

**Examples of jobs with a higher risk of getting COVID-19 include working at a:**



- Places with patients who may have COVID-19 (Nursing home or a hospital)
- An amusement park, a gym or a bar

## **Links to Helpful Documents**

[Plain Language Tips For People with Disabilities About Working With Support Staff During Covid-19](#)

[OSHA guidance for grocery and retail worker safety](#)

[OSHA guidance for construction worker safety](#)

[OSHA guidance package delivery worker safety](#)

[OSHA guidance for manufacturing worker safety](#)

Visit OSHA's website at <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/>

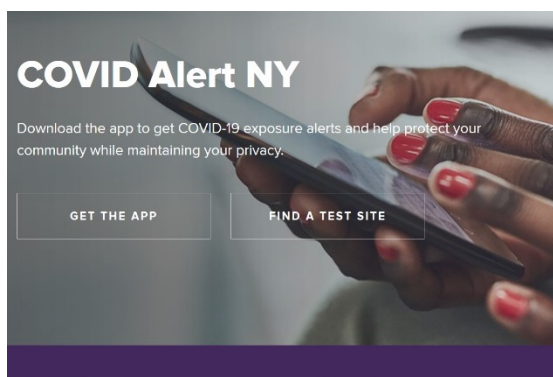
Visit CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

# Is It Time For You To Go Out In Public?



Many people have been staying at home for months. We are doing this to stop the spread of COVID-19. Now, many cities and states are opening up.

Across the country the rules about being in public during COVID-19 are different in each state. Check the rules for your state and city. Keep track of what rules are in place as things reopen where you live.



- Look at the website of the [Health Department for your state.](#)
- If you get disability services, ask your agency.
- Ask a friend or family member for help to learn the rules.



Some people with disabilities have been working throughout the COVID-19 outbreak. They have been working in grocery stores, nursing homes, restaurants, farms etc.

Other workers have been staying home. Many businesses were closed due to COVID-19. Now they are opening up. Their workers are back on the job.



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The decision-making charts on pages 16 - 20 in this booklet will help you make a decision about going out.

The charts help you to:

- Understand the possible risks
- Know what to do to protect yourself
- Be prepared and be safe



Talk to people that you trust. If you get services, your agency must meet with you and make a plan. They must support **YOU** to make this decision.

**The COVID-19 rules for staying home for people with disabilities are the same as for anyone else in your town.**



The people in your life cannot restrict you from going out in public if it is okay for others to do so. There is NO guidance saying people with disabilities cannot go out as long as they are wearing a mask and are social distancing.

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**As always, speaking up is what will make the difference.**

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Every situation may be different so call the Disability Rights organization in your state. They will listen to you. They will help you understand your rights. They will help you speak up for your rights.



A lawyer or advocate will look at the rules for your town. They will review your situation to see if you are being singled out. They will see if you are being treated differently. This may mean it is discrimination.

If you think your rights are being violated, **Protection and Advocacy** may be able to help you. You can find one near you at:

<https://www.ndrn.org/about/ndrn-member-agencies/>

# 1

## Do you know how to protect yourself?

All Yes



- Have you practiced how to stay 6 feet away from others?  Yes  No
- Do you have a mask?  Yes  No
- Will you wear a mask when around people in public?  Yes  No
- Do you have hand sanitizer?  Yes  No
- If you have medical problems, did you ask your doctor what you can do to protect yourself if you go out in public?  Yes  No
- Can you read basic signs?  Yes  No  
Or will you have someone with you who can read signs for you?
- Do you feel healthy (no fever, no cough, no trouble breathing?)  Yes  No

Any  
No

**Any NO answers.** Make a plan to learn what you need to know to be safe to go out. If you think your rights are being violated contact

**Protection and Advocacy in your state.**

<https://www.ndrn.org/about/ndrn-%20member-agencies/>



# 2

## Do you know what is going on in your town with COVID-19?



• Does your Governor say it's ok to go out? Yes No

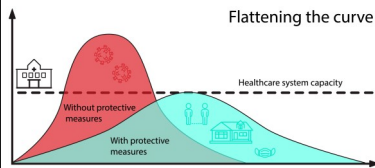
• If you live in a big city, does your Mayor say it is ok to go out? Yes No



• States have put out rules to keep people safe during the Coronavirus. Have you gone over the rules for places in your town? Yes No



• Will you agree to wear a mask and social distance when with someone who is at risk for severe illness? Yes No



• Are the number of Covid-19 cases low, at a safe level in your state? Yes No



**Any NO answers.** Make a plan to learn what you need to know to be safe to go out. If you think your rights are being violated contact

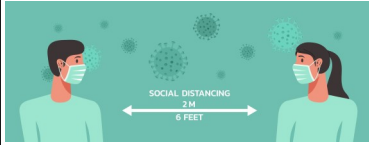
**Protection and Advocacy in your state.**

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# 3

## Is it safe where you want to go?

All Yes



• Will most other people be wearing a mask?

Yes No

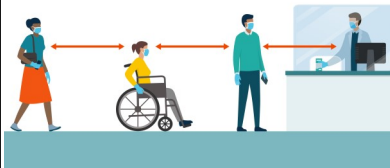
• Can you stay 6 feet away from others?

Yes No



• Will you wash your hands or use hand sanitizer often? (For example before eating, after using the restroom, after leaving a public place, after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.)

Yes No



• Can you avoid crowds?  
Can you easily move around?

Yes No

• If you have to wait in a line, can you stay 6 feet away from others?

Yes No

**[Click here to see a chart that ranks activities from 1 to 9 based on your chance of getting COVID-19. A Spanish-language version is also available.](#)**

Any  
No

**Any NO answers.** Make a plan to learn what you need to know to be safe to go out. If you think your rights are being violated contact

**Protection and Advocacy in your state.**

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# 4

## Can you travel safely?

All Yes - You Can GO

### If you take a bus or train:



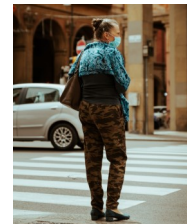
- Can you ride when it is not crowded?  Yes  No
- Will you wear a mask?  Yes  No
- Will you try not to touch surfaces?  Yes  No
- Will you practice social distancing?  Yes  No
- Will you wash or sanitize your hands when you get off?  Yes  No

### If you ride in a car with someone who is not in your household...



- Will you and the driver wear a mask?  Yes  No
- Will you sit in the back seat?  Yes  No
- Will you wash your hands when you get out of the car?  Yes  No

If walking, can you cross the street if there is a big group?  Yes  No



**Any NO answers.** Make a plan to learn what you need to know to be safe to go out. If you think your rights are being violated contact

**Protection and Advocacy in your state.**

<https://www.ndrn.org/about/ndrn-%20member-agencies/>

## Sometimes, you make a decision that the people where you live do not agree with it. What can you do?

- Ask for a Team Meeting to make a plan so you can leave the house.
- Talk to your peers. They may have suggestions. They may know what it is like to have someone tell them “no” when trying to leave their house.



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**Before you advocate, practice. Practice what you will say. Get someone to practice with you. Ask your practice partner to challenge you. They should come up with lots of reasons why you can NOT leave your house.**

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### Role-Play #1:

- Cheyenne says: “I want to walk to the store.”
- Makayla pretends to be a staff person. She says, “You don’t know how to stay 6 feet apart. I worry that you will not be safe.”
- Cheyenne puts on her mask and demonstrates standing 6 feet away from Makayla.



*What else can Cheyenne say to make her case?*

## Role-Play #2:

- Randy says to his staff at her home: “I feel like I am ready to leave the house. I know how to keep safe. And, I have checked out the restaurant and they have outdoor seating. Is that okay?”
- Ebony says, “We don’t want you to get sick. We are afraid you will get the virus and give it to other people.”
- Randy comes back with, “I thought about what you have said. But I disagree. What would I have to do for you to say yes?”



*What else can Randy say to make his case?*

## Role-Play #3:

- Danielle says, “I just got a call from my boss and they want me to come back to work. It took me months to get this job. I’m so relieved that I did not lose my job.”
- Emmanuel says, “I understand your worry, but it is just not safe enough for you to return to work yet.”



- Danielle says, “Well, I hear your concern. I read the OSHA guidelines, took their safety test, and passed it. I know all about social distancing. My coworkers are all back to work. I have a right to work the same as people without disabilities.”
- Danielle adds, “I have talked to my doctor and she said if I wear a cloth face covering, wash my hands often, and stay 6 feet away from others, I am not at greater risk.”

*What else can Danielle say to make her case?*

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If the people in your life still disagree, ask for an individual risk assessment. Agencies should meet with each person and come up with an individual plan. If the conflict continues, you can:

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- Ask for a meeting with the director of your agency.
- Call the state to file a complaint.
- Again, if you think your rights are being violated, you can contact **Protection and Advocacy**. They may be able to help you. You can find one near you at:



<https://www.ndrn.org/about/ndrn-member-agencies/>