



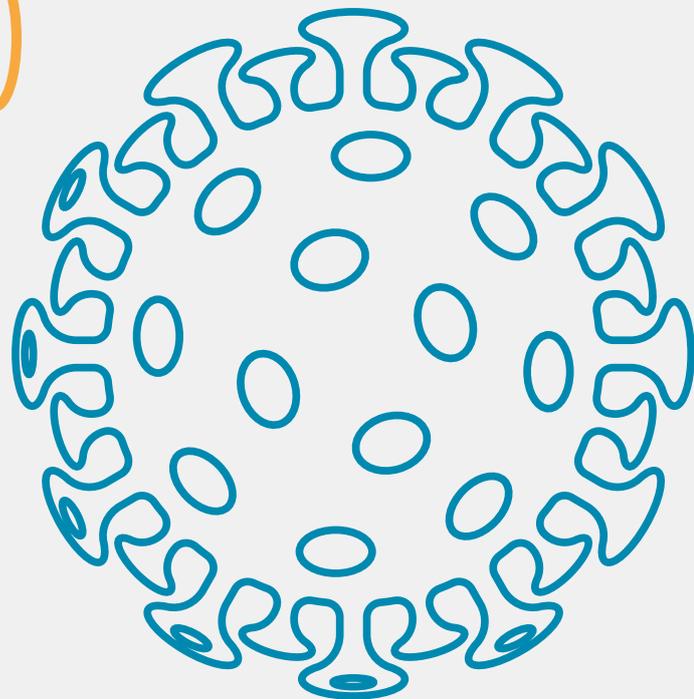
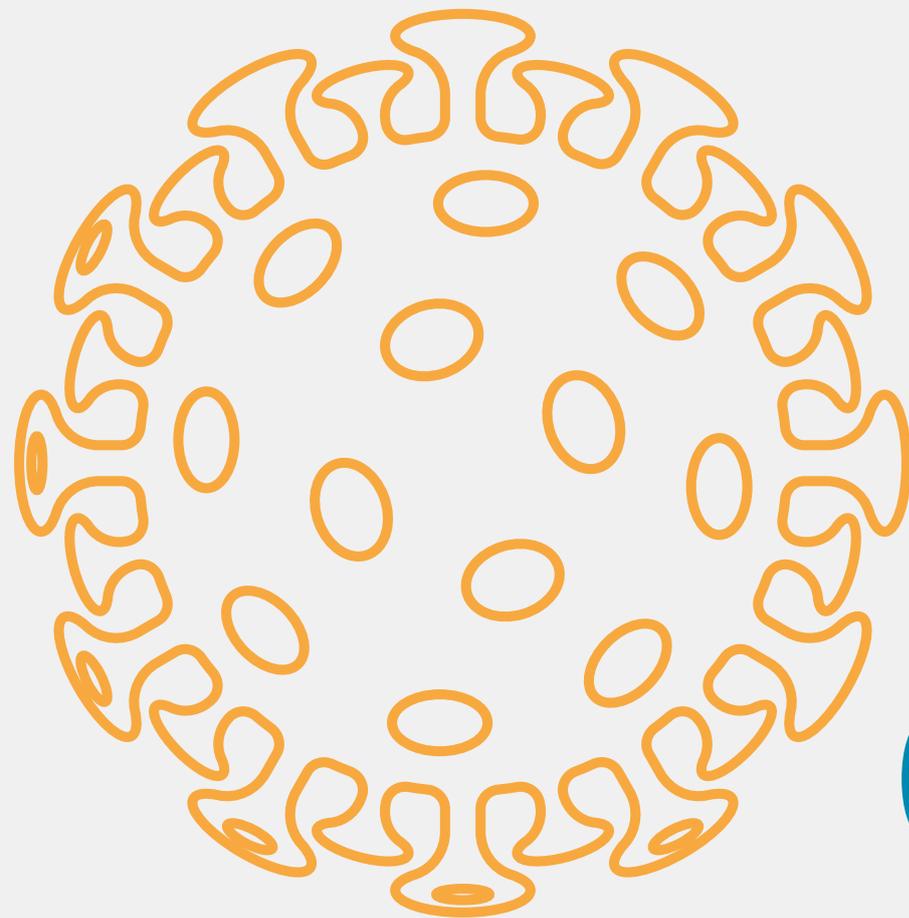
Bundesministerium  
für Gesundheit

*Ethno-  
Medizinisches  
Zentrum e.V.*



# Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2

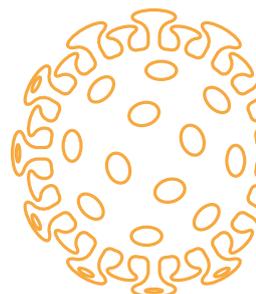
Information and practical advice



**Zusammen  
gegen Corona**

# Act safely and respectfully!

- Please make sure you comply with all the latest **instructions, appeals and notices issued by public authorities.**
- We must show **discipline and act in solidarity.**  
This will help protect your and your fellow citizens' health.
- Only trust **information sources** that are accurate and reliable.
- In Germany, you can obtain current and reliable information from, among others, the Robert Koch-Institute (RKI), the Federal Center for Health Education (Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung, BZgA) and the Ministry of Health (Bundesministerium für Gesundheit, BMG).
- Current and accurate information in a range of languages is also provided by the World Health Organization (WHO), also regarding the international situation in particular.



# How can I best protect myself?

Free **coronavirus vaccination** is currently the best protection available against the illness and its consequences. The more people are vaccinated, the harder it becomes for the virus to spread. In addition, severe and fatal forms of the illness caused by the infection can be avoided. In Germany, several effective and safe vaccines against the coronavirus are available in sufficient quantities to enable every citizen from 12 years of age to be vaccinated.

**Social distancing (Abstand) + hygiene (Hygiene) + masks in everyday life (Alltag):** Apart from vaccination, infection control measures are the foundation of curbing the coronavirus pandemic. The **AHA** formula is now complemented by advice to use an app (**App**) and to regularly air indoor spaces (**Lüften**). The coronavirus alert app (Corona-Warn-App) can inform you anonymously and quickly if you have spent time in the vicinity of an infected person. The L (for Lüften) means you should also make sure that indoor spaces are aired regularly.

Remind your family, friends and acquaintances about these protective measures. Only by remaining mindful can we protect ourselves and others from infection using the **AHA+A+L** formula.



## Protective hygiene rules when coughing or sneezing

- Cough or sneeze into a facial tissue. Use the tissue only once. Dispose of tissues in a rubbish bin and wash or disinfect your hands afterwards if possible.
- If there are no tissues available, hold the crook of your arm (not your hand!) in front of your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.



## Hand washing

- Wash your hands regularly with soap. Especially after returning home, blowing your nose, sneezing or coughing, before preparing food, before eating, after using the toilet, and before and after contact with someone who is ill. If possible, also wash your hands before you put on, and after you take off a mask.
- To wash your hands, hold them under a running tap. Then lather them up all over with soap. Take 20 to 30 seconds to gently rub the soapy lather into all parts of your hands, then rinse it off. Dry your hands thoroughly and use a protective cream if you have sensitive skin.



## Social distancing and wearing a mask

- Please stay informed about current restrictions imposed in your federal state (Bundesland) regarding contact between people.
- Avoid close contact such as shaking hands, kissing, and hugging. You are not being rude; you are merely protecting yourself and others.
- If you are sick, stay at home to recover, and to prevent spreading pathogens.
- Keep a distance of at least 1.5 meters to avoid the direct transmission of pathogens. Even people who are infected but do not show any symptoms can infect others.
- Wearing an FFP2, KN95/N95 or surgical mask is mandatory in many places. Especially in situations where social distancing rules cannot always be complied with, and where several people congregate for a longer period indoors, masks reduce the risk of infection. If used properly, surgical and FFP2 as well as KN95/N95 standard masks can provide better protection from infection than everyday fabric face coverings. Please observe the details and regulations applicable to certain public spaces in your respective federal state (Bundesland).

# Important facts about the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2

The coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 can be transmitted by droplets (e.g. when coughing or sneezing), but also through aerosols. Aerosols are tiny respiratory particles that are released especially by talking loudly or singing. They can remain suspended in the air over a longer period, and transmit the virus. Indoor spaces must therefore be aired regularly.

Smear infections also play a role. Pathogens can be transferred via the hands, from contaminated surfaces to the mucous membranes of the mouth, the nose, or the eyes. It is therefore important to follow general hygiene rules such as regular hand washing and only touching your face with clean hands.

Infections with the coronavirus can vary with respect to the occurring symptoms. They can range from infections that pass without causing symptoms to cases of severe pneumonia.

The most commonly reported symptoms include cough, runny nose, and fever, as well as loss of the sense of smell and taste. These symptoms do not necessarily occur together. Other possible symptoms include headache, joint pain, fatigue, and sore throat. Stomach ache, and nausea and vomiting may also occur as a consequence of SARS-CoV-2 infection.

Especially older people and people with existing health conditions are at a higher risk of progressing to severe disease. However, younger people without pre-existing conditions may also experience progression to severe disease.

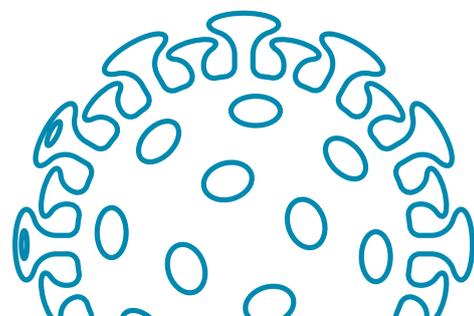
At this time, it is assumed that up to 14 days may pass between infection and the onset of symptoms. The median time period between infection and the appearance of symptoms is 5 – 6 days.

It is important to know that infected persons can pass the virus on to others several days before they even develop symptoms themselves! Many transmissions already occur during the one or two days immediately before the infected person develops symptoms. Even if an infected person doesn't develop symptoms, they can still infect others.

If someone within your social circle has become infected, this does not mean it is the person's own fault.

In some areas – e.g. in child care, nursing homes, or at work – not all situations that may pose a risk of transmission can be avoided.

**Important:** coronavirus vaccination offers the best possible protection from illness and its consequences, and represents the pathway out of the pandemic. However, hygiene rules must continue to be observed. While the risk is markedly reduced, transmission cannot be completely excluded, even among those who are vaccinated.



## Have I got the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2?

If you notice you are having symptoms, or if you had contact with a person who has been confirmed to have the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, avoid all unnecessary contact with other people (especially those in risk groups), and stay at home.

If you have symptoms, contact your GP or other treating doctor. You can also contact the on-call medical service, a local coronavirus hotline, or a fever clinic. These points of contact can inform you about what to do next.

The on-call medical service is available throughout Germany by dialling 116 117, including at night, at weekends, and on public holidays.

In an emergency, please call 112.

Tell the doctor if you have, for example, existing health conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, severe depression, bipolar disorder, dementia or chronic respiratory illness.

This also applies if you have a disease or are receiving treatment that lowers the immune system.

Please do not go to your doctor's practice without making an appointment. This way you are protecting yourself and avoid spreading coronavirus!

If you had contact with an infected person but don't have symptoms yourself, please inform the responsible local public health authority (Gesundheitsamt). This also applies if you are using the coronavirus alert app (Corona-Warn-App) and have received a warning message.

The public health authority will inform you about what to do next.

You can find your local public health authority at [www.rki.de/mein-gesundheitsamt](http://www.rki.de/mein-gesundheitsamt)

## Which testing options are available?

If an acute infection is suspected, or after contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19, for example, a laboratory test is used to detect the virus.

The most reliable method is detecting the genetic material of the virus using a **PCR test**. To conduct the test, health professionals in doctor's practices or testing centres will take a swab from the nasal cavity or the back of the throat. The result, which you receive in form of written or digital confirmation, is in most cases provided within 1 – 2 days.

Another testing method is the **rapid antigen test**, which must be conducted by trained medical personnel. In contrast to PCR testing, the sample is immediately analysed on site. The test result is given in form of a written or digital certificate. A negative result is valid for a limited amount of time only, and can never completely exclude the possibility of an infection being present.

A positive PCR or antigen test result will also be reported to the responsible public health authority (Gesundheitsamt) so that the necessary infection control measures can be taken.

You can use a **self-testing kit** to test yourself. Self-tests can offer additional safety in certain everyday situations – for example before visiting family and friends. Self-testing kits are freely available for purchase at pharmacies, chemists and retail outlets.

In certain situations, self-tests can be conducted on site and under the observation of professional personnel (monitored antigen self-test), e.g. for visitors immediately before entering a medical facility. Negative results from these tests are also valid for a limited time only.

**Important:** a positive antigen self-test result indicates a suspected infection and requires immediate confirmation with a PCR test.

If you test yourself at home and obtain a positive result, you should make an appointment with your GP or call 116 117 in order to get a PCR test. Until you receive the result of the confirmatory test, you should stay at home and observe the AHA+A+L rule.

If the result of your antigen test is positive, you must assume that you are highly infectious to other people. A negative test result does not exclude the possibility of a coronavirus infection being present. You must therefore absolutely continue to follow the protective rules of social distancing + hygiene + masks + app + airing (AHA+A+L).

## Can I be vaccinated against COVID-19?

Only few people in Germany are unable to be vaccinated, e.g. because of an allergy. Also, children under 12 years of age cannot yet be vaccinated against COVID-19.

Several effective and safe vaccines for immunisation against COVID-19 have already been approved in Germany. Coronavirus vaccination is recommended by the STIKO (Standing Committee on Vaccination) for persons from 12 years of age.

In addition, there is an option for a booster vaccination using an mRNA vaccine as a preventive measure for persons from the age of 60 years, persons residing in care facilities, facilities for integration assistance, and other facilities for vulnerable groups, as well as for immunocompromised people and care recipients. Booster vaccinations are also an option for people who regularly work with those with infectious illness.

In addition, booster vaccinations are offered to all persons who have received a full course of vaccination using vector-based vaccines (two doses of Vaxzevria® by AstraZeneca or one dose of COVID-19 Vaccine Janssen® by Johnson & Johnson), or who have received a single dose of a vector-based vaccine after having recovered from COVID-19.

COVID-19 vaccination is not compulsory in Germany.

Proof of vaccination is provided through the yellow vaccination passport ('Impfpass'), a confirmation of vaccination issued on site, and the digital vaccination certificate.

You can find current information on coronavirus vaccination and the rules that apply to those who have been vaccinated or have recovered from COVID-19 at [www.corona-schutzimpfung.de](http://www.corona-schutzimpfung.de)

## How dangerous are coronavirus variants?

New variants of the coronavirus are now spreading, such as the alpha, beta, and delta variants. Data on these variants point to a higher level of transmissibility. This means they are more infectious than the original SARS-CoV-2 variant.

Full coronavirus vaccination as well as complying with the recommended code of behaviour (including AHA+A+L) continue to offer the best possible protection against the virus and its variants.

## Is wearing a mask necessary?

When a person infected with SARS-CoV-2 is wearing a mask, some of the droplets produced – e.g. when coughing, talking, singing, or sneezing – are held back. Droplets then can't spread as far as they would without such protection. Especially in situations where social distancing is not always possible, wearing a mask is therefore sensible.

Wearing an FFP2, KN95/N95 or surgical mask is mandatory in many places. Especially in situations where social distancing rules cannot always be complied with, and where several people congregate indoors for a longer period, masks reduce the risk of infection.

If used properly, surgical, and FFP2 as well as KN95/N95 standard masks can provide better protection from infection than everyday fabric face coverings.

Please observe the details and regulations applicable in your location.\*

**Important:** masks must fit well and must be changed regularly, and at the latest when they have become damp. Damp masks do not provide a barrier to viruses.

Further information about masks is available from the Federal Institute for Drugs and Medical Devices (Bundesinstitut für Arzneimittel und Medizinprodukte):

[www.bfarm.de/SharedDocs/Risikoinformationen/Medizinprodukte/DE/schutzmasken.html](http://www.bfarm.de/SharedDocs/Risikoinformationen/Medizinprodukte/DE/schutzmasken.html)

Even if you are wearing a mask, the following continues to apply: keep at least 1.5 meters apart from others, practice good hand hygiene and observe cough and sneeze etiquette, as well as airing indoor spaces regularly.

Each individual protection measure increases overall safety.

## Is it necessary to use hand disinfectant?

Regular and thorough hand washing is usually sufficient. If hand washing is not possible, hand disinfection may be sensible.

\* The **NINA coronavirus alert app** provides, apart from important warnings, information about the coronavirus pandemic. For selected locations and – if activated – your current location, you can receive information about local regulations currently in force. You can find further information about the NINA alert app at [www.bbk.bund.de/DE/NINA/Warn-App\\_NINA\\_node.html](http://www.bbk.bund.de/DE/NINA/Warn-App_NINA_node.html)

\*\* You can find information about what you have to do when entering Germany at [www.bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/coronavirus-merkblatt-fuer-reisende](http://www.bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/coronavirus-merkblatt-fuer-reisende)  
Since 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021, German mobile phone network providers are also sending current coronavirus information from the German federal government by SMS to persons entering Germany.

## What is the difference between isolation and quarantine, and what is their purpose?

Isolation is a measure imposed by the authorities on patients with confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection. Depending on the severity of symptoms, it can be carried out at home or in hospital.

Quarantine is the time-limited segregation of persons who are at high risk of having become infected with SARS-CoV-2, and may therefore contribute to spreading the pathogen. They are mostly close contacts of infected persons or travellers returning from risk areas.\*\*

The goal of isolation and quarantine is to prevent the spread of a pathogen by reducing contact with other people.

## How long does isolation/quarantine last?

The decision whether a person may leave home quarantine or home isolation is taken by the local public health authority in consultation with the treating medical personnel.

For persons who are in home isolation because of COVID-19 illness, isolation is lifted no earlier than 14 days after the onset of illness. It only ends when a rapid or PCR test returns a negative result, and if there are no symptoms of COVID-19 for 48 hours or the person's condition has improved markedly.

For home quarantine, the Robert-Koch-Institute (RKI) recommends a duration of 10 days. It is calculated from the last day of contact with an infectious person. A PCR test is recommended at the earliest opportunity. A negative rapid antigen or PCR test result should be evident before quarantine is lifted.

Exceptions apply to people who are fully vaccinated, or who have had SARS-CoV-2 infection during the last 6 months as confirmed by a positive PCR test result ('recovered') and are not showing any signs of illness. Further information on this topic is available at

[www.zusammengecorona.de](http://www.zusammengecorona.de)

## What should I keep in mind when quarantined at home?

During home quarantine, you must follow the instructions of the public health authority (Gesundheitsamt). These include that you do not leave your home and do not receive visitors. In addition, please monitor your state of health.

Avoid close contact with others in your household, and use communal spaces at different times where possible.

Quarantine regulations must be adapted with respect to the age of children living in the household. For example, physical separation of children and parents (incl. siblings if necessary) inside the household should only be maintained if acceptable to the parents and tolerated by the child.

If being present in the same room at the same time is unavoidable, keep a distance of at least 1.5 meters and wear a mask. In this case, please take special care to air rooms generously.

Even if quarantine has not been imposed on other members of your household, it is recommended that they minimise contact with others for 14 days, get tested immediately if symptoms appear, and place themselves in voluntary quarantine.

Also inform close contacts outside of your household. These persons should also restrict contact with others where possible, and watch for symptoms.

Ask family members, acquaintances or friends for help with shopping, which should then be left outside your door. If you are not receiving help, please contact local neighbourhood assistance initiatives.

Make sure to air your apartment or house regularly.

Cutlery, crockery, and personal hygiene items should not be shared with other family members or people living in the household. Utensils and dishes must be washed regularly and thoroughly.

## What should I do if symptoms appear during home quarantine or home isolation?

Please immediately inform the public health authority (Gesundheitsamt) if you develop general malaise, or symptoms such as fever, cough, or breathing difficulties during home quarantine.

If you feel seriously unwell, please call your GP, another medical practice, or the on-call medical service by dialling 116 117. Make sure you mention during the call that you are in home quarantine.

If you have confirmed COVID-19 disease and are convalescing in home isolation, you should obtain medical advice by telephone if your symptoms worsen.

If you need medical assistance for a different or pre-existing health condition, please call your GP, another medical practice, or the on-call medical service by dialling 116 117.

Make sure you mention during the call that you are in home quarantine.

In an emergency, e.g. in case of acute shortness of breath, call emergency services on 112.

## Does COVID-19 have long-term effects?

Weeks or even months after being sick with COVID-19, symptoms may still persist, and new ones may appear. These include e.g. specific long-term effects of intensive care treatment.

Late effects of COVID-19 may also appear independently of the severity of disease, and even after an infection that went unnoticed.

Especially in cases of infections that include pneumonia, longer recovery periods are being observed. The coronavirus affects multiple organs. It can not only affect the lungs, but also other organs such as the heart, the kidneys, the liver, and the brain.

Because of the diversity of symptoms and a lack of clarity about the mechanisms that cause them, no clinical definition of the possible long-term damage from SARS-CoV-2 infection is available yet. Long-term effects are not described as a consistent phenomenon, but as a range of different clinical presentations.

Common symptoms are general malaise, fatigue, memory problems, and persistent exhaustion.

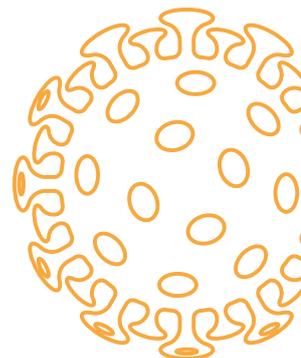
Unusual symptoms such as sudden vomiting and strong dizziness have also been reported. Some of those affected are struggling or entirely unable to cope with everyday life.

Especially people with severe disease frequently suffer from long-term effects.

The exact causes of the long-term effects of infection are still being investigated. If you are experiencing persistent or new symptoms as a result of your infection, please inform your GP.

Some hospitals in Germany have so-called post-COVID outpatient clinics. If symptoms of exhaustion persist for longer than six months, patients can present there for further investigation. Peer support groups have also been formed. You can find an overview of such initiatives in Germany e.g. at

[www.langzeitcovid.de](http://www.langzeitcovid.de)



# Where can I find further information?



With the corona alert app (Corona-Warn-App), you can be informed anonymously and quickly if you have been in the vicinity of an infected person. The app also provides additional information.

The app is available for download free of charge from the [app store](#) or from [Google Play](#).

**Your local public health authority (Gesundheitsamt)** offers information and assistance. You can find the telephone number of your local public health authority at [www.rki.de/mein-gesundheitsamt](http://www.rki.de/mein-gesundheitsamt)

**The Federal Ministry of Health (BMG)** offers centrally collated information about the coronavirus at [www.zusammengegencorona.de](http://www.zusammengegencorona.de) and about coronavirus vaccination at [www.corona-schutzimpfung.de](http://www.corona-schutzimpfung.de)

Citizen's Services Line: **030 346 465 100**

Advice for people with hearing loss:

Fax: **030 340 60 66-07**,

[info.deaf@bmg.bund.de](mailto:info.deaf@bmg.bund.de)

[info.gehoerlos@bmg.bund.de](mailto:info.gehoerlos@bmg.bund.de)

Sign language video telephone:

[www.gebaerdentelefon.de/bmg](http://www.gebaerdentelefon.de/bmg)

**The Robert Koch-Institute (RKI)** provides information about the coronavirus on its website at [www.rki.de](http://www.rki.de)

**The Federal Center for Health Education (BZgA)** has compiled answers to frequently asked questions about the coronavirus at [www.infektionsschutz.de](http://www.infektionsschutz.de)

**The Paul-Ehrlich-Institute** provides information about COVID-19 vaccines at [www.pei.de/coronavirus](http://www.pei.de/coronavirus)

You also find information in several languages at [www.integrationsbeauftragte.de/corona-virus](http://www.integrationsbeauftragte.de/corona-virus) and [www.eu-gleichbehandlungsstelle.de/corona-virus](http://www.eu-gleichbehandlungsstelle.de/corona-virus)

**The Office of Foreign Affairs** provides safety information for travellers to affected regions at [www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/ReiseUndSicherheit](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/ReiseUndSicherheit)

**The World Health Organization (WHO)** provides information on the global situation at [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)

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