



Guidance for People with an Active Substance Use Disorder



People with substance use disorder (SUD) should take extra precautions during the coronavirus pandemic.

Coronavirus and Risks

The effects of the coronavirus on a person's lungs combined with the weakened immune systems for individuals suffering from an addiction has prompted experts to warn of greater risk of complications. Take care and follow these recommendations to stay safe.

Take Precautions

There are precautions recommended by trusted sources that you can take to help keep you healthy. Avoid close contact with people who are sick and follow these preventive actions:

- For those struggling with a substance use disorder, do not share your supplies, including injecting supplies, pipes, vapes, bongs, straws or glasses.
- Despite social distancing requirements, do not use opioids alone especially if injecting fentanyl or heroin.
- If you do find yourself alone, call or video chat a friend or family member and have them call 9-1-1 if you become unresponsive.
- Stock up on naloxone to have on hand where you are staying and ensure loved ones have access as well. For individuals who store extra supplies and substances, consider engaging friends or family on a plan to ensure safe use.
- For those getting take-home opioids or virtual MAT prescriptions, don't sell or give them to others, and don't take more of your MAT than prescribed.
- The COVID-19 situation can also be the time to start a treatment and recovery plan. Call a local addiction treatment provider you know and trust or text Addiction Policy Forum helpline at 833-301-HELP to begin your journey today, especially if you are struggling with vaping, marijuana, opioids or stimulants like methamphetamines.

Stay Safe

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after using the bathroom, blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing, or having been in a public place.
- If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- To the extent possible, avoid touching high-touch surfaces in public places—elevator buttons, door handles, handrails, handshaking with people, etc.
- Use a tissue or your sleeve to cover your hand or finger if you must touch something. Wash your hands after touching surfaces in public places.
- Avoid touching your face, nose, eyes, etc.
- Wear a mask or scarf - this will help prevent the spread of the virus but may not necessarily protect you from catching it so following other precautions remains important.
- Clean and disinfect your home to remove germs: practice routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces (for example: tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, toilets, faucets, sinks & cell phones).
- Avoid crowds, especially in poorly ventilated spaces. Your risk of exposure to respiratory viruses like COVID-19 may increase in crowded, closed-in settings with little air circulation if there are people in the crowd who are sick.
- If you live in a multi-generational household, try to pay special attention to protect those above 60.
- Avoid non-essential travel. Check with the authorities in your area or state. If you were planning on going outside the US, the CDC recommends that travelers avoid all non-essential international travel.
- If you need to go out, it's best to check the [CDC's guidance](#) about protecting yourself and others. If you are a cancer patient, survivor, or caregiver, talk to your cancer care team about whether there are any additional precautions needed.