

HIV and Coronavirus: What to Know

COVID-19, the illness caused by the virus SARS-CoV-2, is a coronavirus cousin of the SARS virus that caused breathing illnesses in 2013.

Although it can appear as a mild illness, for those with underlying health problems or advancing age, the risk increases that the infection can become severe. These health problems include **high blood pressure, heart and lung disease, diabetes and compromised immune systems.**

If you are living with HIV here is what you should know about COVID-19.



The risk of complications from COVID-19 increases for people with weaker immune systems from HIV. Those are people who are untreated, or who have a lower T cell count and a higher viral load.

What can you do? Be sure to take your HIV medications and work to keep the HIV virus controlled.



Individuals over age 60 are at increased risk due to the aging of the immune system which can affect its response.

What to know? Over half the people living with HIV are over 50 years of age. This means paying particular attention to and following the guidance for prevention of infection. Also this means being sure that your flu and pneumonia vaccines are up to date.

What else can I do?

- ✓ **Be prepared.** Try to maintain a 30-day supply of medications on hand at all times.
- ✓ **Have a plan** to get medical attention, in case of quarantine or isolation. This can include telehealth and physician on-line portals.
- ✓ **Wash your hands frequently** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds each time. This is essential for removing COVID-19 viruses from the hands. Handwashing is better than hand sanitizer. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- ✓ **Avoid people who are sick.** Maintain social distance – keep a 6 foot distance between you and others.
- ✓ **Maintain a social network but remotely.** Online chats, phone calls are all fine and essential for maintaining good mental health. Try to avoid social isolation.

Remember we are all in this together, even from a distance!

If you have general questions, please call Kentucky's COVID-19 hotline at 1-800-722-5725 or visit their website at www.kycovid19.ky.gov.



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<https://nkyhealth.org/individual-or-family/health-alerts/coronavirus/>