

# CORONAVIRUS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: WHAT VETERANS NEED TO KNOW

Our call centers and some VA health facilities are currently experiencing very high numbers of calls. To help us address the most urgent needs first, we ask that you use our online tools and frequently asked questions for routine or non-urgent questions. We'll continue to update this page as the situation changes.

**Visit the CDC for general coronavirus COVID-19 questions.**

For general questions about the coronavirus COVID-19, such as symptoms, prevention steps, guidance for travelers, and more, [visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#).

## What is Coronavirus COVID-19?

The CDC defines COVID-19 as a new type of coronavirus (or “novel coronavirus”). COVID-19 belongs to a large family of viruses that are common in people and different animal species. On rare occasions, animal coronaviruses can infect people, and then spread from person-to-person. This is how COVID-19 started. Typical symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, coughing, and shortness of breath. Symptoms can range from mild to severe.

To learn more about COVID-19, prevention steps, guidance for high-risk groups, travelers, and more, [visit the CDC](#).

## What should I do if I have symptoms?

If you have a fever, coughing, and shortness of breath, call your VA medical center before going to a clinic, urgent care, or emergency room. You can also [send your doctor a secure message](#) through My HealtheVet.

Contacting us first helps us protect you, medical staff, and other patients.

[Visit the CDC](#) to learn more about the symptoms of COVID-19.

## What is VA doing to deal with COVID-19?

We have activated VA's emergency management coordination cell (EMCC) and have started clinical screenings at all VA facilities. [Learn about VA's public health response](#).

## Can I be tested for COVID-19?

Testing is based on many factors, including the severity of symptoms, other existing illnesses or conditions, possible exposure, and other criteria. VA health facilities have been testing Veterans who meet the [testing criteria provided by the CDC](#).

## What should I do if I have an upcoming VA health appointment?

For routine appointments, we recommend using telehealth (phone or video) for your scheduled appointment. You can also cancel and reschedule your appointment for a later date.

If you have a non-urgent elective procedure scheduled, we may contact you to cancel or reschedule for a later date. **Note:** Urgent and emergent procedures will continue as scheduled.

### To change your in-person appointment to a telehealth visit:

- [Use Secure Messaging](#) through My HealtheVet to send a message to your provider.
- [Use the VA appointments tool](#) to schedule a telehealth appointment online. (Available only for some types of health services.)

[Learn about VA telehealth appointments.](#)

## How do I reschedule or cancel my upcoming VA appointment?

Sign in to your VA.gov account to reschedule or cancel your appointments online.

**Note:** Some clinics are advising patients to not reschedule or schedule new appointments for some types of routine care, as they develop more guidance on safely providing care to protect patients and staff. Because this is a rapidly changing situation, the best way to get the most up-to-date facility information is to check your local VA health facility's website. [Find a VA location](#).

### View, schedule, or cancel a VA appointment online.

#### Please sign in to use this service.

Try signing in with your **DS Logon**, **My HealtheVet**, or **ID.me** account. If you don't have any of those accounts, you can create one.

## What if I tried to call my clinic, and I can't get through?

We apologize if you're not able to get through or are experiencing long hold times. We're currently experiencing very high numbers of calls. Our staff is working hard to handle the increase in calls.

To help us address the most urgent needs first, we ask that you use one of our online tools for routine or non-urgent concerns. You can:

- **Use Secure Messaging.** You can [send a secure message to your provider](#) about any health concern or question.
- **Download VA Video Connect.** Your provider may ask you to consider telehealth for an upcoming appointment. By downloading and learning about the [VA Video Connect app](#) now, you can prepare yourself.
- **Try health chat (limited availability).** You may be able to use our health chat if your primary VA health facility is part of the VA health chat pilot. [See if you're able to use health chat](#)

## What should I do if I need to refill my prescription?

If you currently get your prescription sent to you by mail, you'll continue to receive your refills as normal. If you usually pick up your prescriptions in person, we encourage you to use our [online prescription refill and tracking](#) tool. To make sure you have your medicine in time, request your refill at least 10 days before you'll run out of your current prescription.

For questions about your prescriptions, [send a secure message](#) to your provider through My HealthVet.

## Can I use emergency care?

If you're experiencing a life-threatening medical emergency, call 911 or go to your nearest ER.

If you have an urgent care need, we ask that you contact us first. You can [use secure messaging](#) or call your facility's advice nurse before going to a clinic or walk-in urgent care facility. By not using the ER for nonmedical emergencies, you can help us protect you, medical staff, and other patients, as well as help us address critical medical needs first during this period of COVID-19 outbreak.

### Symptoms that may need emergency medical (immediate) attention include:

- Chest pain
- Numbness or tingling in your arms or on one side of your body
- Severe fever or violent vomiting
- Bleeding that doesn't stop

### Symptoms that may need urgent care attention (within 24 to 48 hours) include:

- Sore throat, earache
- Sprains or strained muscles from sports or exercise
- Minor cuts and injuries

## **I don't have symptoms, but I feel anxious and overwhelmed. What can I do?**

Concerns about COVID-19 can be stressful for many people, and it's understandable to feel anxious. It is important to take steps to manage stress and take care of yourself.

- **Stay connected and healthy.** Stay in touch with friends and family by phone and social media, and get enough sleep and exercise. Visit the CDC to [learn about managing stress and anxiety about COVID-19](#).
- **Get more tips.** The [National Center for PTSD](#) has created a guide for managing stress associated with COVID-19.

### **How do I talk to someone right now?**

## **How do I know if my VA health facility is still open for regular appointments?**

Because this is a rapidly changing situation, the best way to get the most up-to-date facility information is to check your local VA health facility's website. [Find a VA location](#)

## **Can I visit a patient at a VA facility?**

At this time, we recommend that you postpone your visit to help stop community spread of the coronavirus COVID-19. Postponing your visit helps us protect older Veterans and those who already have health issues.

**Note:** In order to protect the most vulnerable patients against community spread, we're currently not permitting outside visitors to see residents in nursing homes, and spinal cord injury and disorder centers, except for compassionate cases. "Compassionate case" means that the Veteran is in their last stage of life in a hospice unit. In compassionate cases, visitors will be limited to a specific Veteran's room only.

Learn about the [steps we're taking to protect Veterans in nursing homes](#).

To learn about social distancing and other ways to prevent community spread of COVID-19, [visit the CDC](#).

### **More information**

[Visit the CDC's COVID-19 website](#)

[Get guidance for high-risk groups, travelers, COVID-19 resources for the community, and more at the CDC.](#)