
FACT SHEET

Community Spread of COVID-19

Data released on November 30th, 2020 by the Pennsylvania Department of Health shows that for the prior week, 66 of Pennsylvania's 67 counties have had COVID-19 case number increases that are categorized as "*substantial transmission status*." (Pennsylvania COVID-19 Early Warning Monitoring Dashboard Update for Nov. 20 - Nov. 26). COVID-19, caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, spreads most easily when an infected person coughs, sneezes, speaks, sings, or breathes and liquid particles become airborne; other people can then get these particles into their mouth, nose or eyes and may then become infected with the virus. (CDC, 2020; WHO, 2020).

"Community Spread" – What Does That Mean?

- It means that people have been infected with the virus in an area, including some who are not sure how or where they became infected (CDC, 2020).
- It may include the detection of confirmed cases of COVID-19 where there is no apparent link to other confirmed cases (CDC, 2020).
- It is more likely to occur when people are in close contact with each other (within 6 feet or closer), gathered in poorly ventilated indoor settings, or are in large crowds.

When the spread of COVID-19 is identified in the community, individuals with intellectual disabilities and/or autism (ID/A) and their caregivers are susceptible to becoming infected.

Activities outside of work can increase your risk of infection when community spread is high. Ask yourself these questions to determine possible exposure outside of work.

While out in the community have you:

- Been in *close contact* with other people? *Close contact* is defined by the CDC as “within 6 feet of a person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period” (CDC Appendices, 2020).
 - how long was the interaction?
 - how close were you?
- Gathered with other people in a poorly ventilated indoor space?
- Gone to places where large crowds gather?
- Come into contact with others showing symptoms of COVID-19, such as: coughing, shortness of breath, or fever?
- Come into contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19?

Suggested safe practices to follow if you think you've been exposed:

- Know your facility's policies and procedures related to possible exposure and follow accordingly.
- Contact your employer to report a suspected community exposure.
- Report symptoms to your primary care physician and follow their advice.
- Follow the recommendations of the CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/public-health-recommendations.html>

How to reduce community spread:

- Practice physical distancing by keeping at least six feet between people (masks are not a substitute for physical distancing) (CDC, 2020).
- Avoid large gatherings.
- Isolate if you are ill or exposed to someone who is ill and seek testing.
- Wear a face covering that covers your nose and mouth.
- Clean hands frequently by washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or by using alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes nose or mouth.
- Follow the current recommendations adapted from the *PA Limited-Time Stay at Home Advisory* as of 11/23/20:
 - Stay at home unless essentials are needed for yourself or someone you are caring for (e.g., medical appointments, food, medicine, exercise, etc.).
 - Don't have others in your home who do not normally live with you.
 - Work from home if possible.
 - When you are outside of your home, wear a mask at all times.
 - Avoid travel in or out of Pennsylvania.
 - Limit holiday gatherings to those who currently live in your home.

Because of high community spread in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the governor issued new guidelines for mitigation efforts effective November 27, 2020.

A copy of these guidelines may be found here:

<https://www.governor.pa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/20201123-TWW-mitigation-enforcement-immunity-order.pdf>

References:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020, July 15). Appendices. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Retrieved December 2, 2020, from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/contact-tracing/contact-tracing-plan/appendix.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020, July 2). Communities, schools, workplaces, & events. Retrieved November 30, 2020, from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/community-mitigation.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020, August 4). CDC COVID-19 global response. Retrieved November 30, 2020, from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/global-COVID-19/community-mitigation-measures.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020, October 29). Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Retrieved November 30, 2020, from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/contact-tracing/contact-tracing-plan/contact-tracing.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020, July 7). Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Retrieved November 30, 2020, from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020, August 3). Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Retrieved December 1, 2020, from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/direct-service-providers.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020, September 3). Handwashing - Clean hands save lives | CDC. Retrieved November 30, 2020, from <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/index.html>

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. (2020, November 19). COVID alert PA. PA Unites Against COVID. <https://www.pa.gov/covid/covid-alert-pa/>

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. (2020, November 24). Responding to COVID-19 in Pennsylvania. PA.Gov. Retrieved November 30, 2020, from <https://www.pa.gov/guides/responding-to-COVID-19/#COVIDMitigationinPennsylvania>

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. (2020, November 24). Stop the spread. PA Unites Against COVID. Retrieved December 1, 2020, from <https://www.pa.gov/covid/stop-the-spread/>

Pennsylvania COVID-19 Early Warning Monitoring Dashboard Update for Nov. 20 - Nov. 26. (2020, November 30). <https://www.governor.pa.gov/newsroom/pennsylvania-COVID-19-early-warning-monitoring-dashboard-update-for-nov-20-nov-26-case-increases-top-41000-percent-positivity-at-11-7-and-66-counties-with-substantial-transmission/>.



Penn Medicine. (n.d.). What if I'm exposed to COVID-19? | Penn Medicine Together | Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. Retrieved December 1, 2020, from <https://www.med.upenn.edu/PennMedicineTogether/COVID-19-exposure/>

Pennsylvania Department of Health. (2020, November 24). COVID-19 symptoms and testing. Department of Health. Retrieved November 30, 2020, from <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Symptoms-Testing.aspx>

The Autism Services, Education, Resources, and Training Collaborative (ASERT). (n.d.). Wearing a mask social story. Retrieved December 1, 2020, from <https://pautism.org/resource/wearing-mask-social-story/>

World Health Organization. (2020, October 20). Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): How is it transmitted? WHO | World Health Organization. Retrieved November 30, 2020, from <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-COVID-19-how-is-it-transmitted>

World Health Organization. (2020, January 10). Coronavirus. Retrieved December 1, 2020, from https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1