COVID-19 Resources for People with Diabetes

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness that first surfaced in late 2019. It can spread from person to person, and risk of infection is higher in people who are in close proximity to people with COVID-19.

Diabetes and COVID-19

People with serious underlying medical conditions such as diabetes and hypertension (high blood pressure) may be at higher risk for more serious complications from COVID-19. Those with a weakened immune system are also at higher risk.

Certain medications are also able to increase vulnerability to infections. People with diabetes are not more likely to get COVID-19, but they are more likely to face worse symptoms and more severe complications from the illness. If you have diabetes, take extra care to protect yourself during the COVID-19 pandemic. Here are some steps to stay healthy, prevent the spread of COVID-19, and prepare for potentially becoming sick.

This toolkit is designed to equip you with the resources needed to stay safe and healthy.

Avera’s mission is to make a positive impact in the lives and health of persons and communities by providing quality services guided by Christian values. If you think you may have problems paying part of your bill, contact your local business office or billing staff. We can discuss payment options that may be available to you.
What Do I Do If I Feel Sick?

- **Stay home:** If you are sick.
- **Call ahead:** If you’ve had symptoms of COVID-19 in the past 14 days, call your local clinic or the COVID-19 Hotline at 1-877-AT-AVERA (1-877-282-8372). From there you will be given further directions.
  - Do not go to the doctor or emergency room before you have called the hotline and been given further instructions because you could be directed to a different location or asked to stay home.
  - Keep in mind, about 80% of patients who have COVID-19 can be treated at home.
- **Returning to work:** Consistent with CDC guidelines, Avera does not retest patients so that their employer can have proof they’ve recovered from COVID-19 before returning to work. Nor does Avera provide return-to-work notes.

To return to work, you must be fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication, and it must be 10 days since the onset of symptoms. Recovering COVID-19 patients returning to work can wear cloth masks to protect others from potential shedding of the virus.

What if I need to get tested?

If you are having symptoms of COVID-19 call 1-877-AT-AVERA (1-877-282-8372), or call your clinic. Avera has set up processes for testing that will limit exposure. Based on the severity of your symptoms, your provider may ask you to stay home and isolate yourself.

**WATCH FOR SYMPTOMS**

Symptoms may appear within 2-14 days of exposure to the virus. In the last 14 days, have you noticed these symptoms?

- Shortness of breath
- Fever over 100°
- Cough
- Muscle pain
- Chills
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat

**CALL BEFORE YOU VISIT.**

Call your clinic or 1-877-AT-AVERA (1-877-282-8372)

Get guidance on symptoms  People only tested if screened first

**ISOLATE YOURSELF.**

Wait for results  Don’t share items  Don’t share bathroom or bedroom areas
Managing Diabetes & Preventing COVID-19

Get Ready

• Have enough diabetes supplies for at least 1 month, including:
  • Diabetes pills/insulin/injectables and other medications – Check with your pharmacy and insurance provider to see if you can get additional refills now.
  • Insulin syringes or pen needles
  • Glucose test strips and lancets
  • Continuous glucose monitor supplies
  • Insulin pump supplies
  • Ketostix (if you have type 1 diabetes)
  • Glucagon kit, glucose tabs, glucose gel or other hypoglycemia treatment

• Stock your kitchen with non-perishable foods and beverages.
• Keep the following information readily available:
  • Phone number for your primary care and diabetes care providers
  • A list of ALL your medications (prescription and over-the-counter)
  • Phone numbers and email addresses for your family and other emergency contacts

Continue Healthy Habits

• Continue to take all your medications as prescribed. If you are running out of medication or cannot afford more, call your provider immediately.
• Avoid going into stores as much as possible. Use the pharmacy drive up window and grocery curbside pickup or delivery services.
• Check your blood glucose levels regularly and use the results to make changes in your eating habits and activity. Call your provider to discuss changing your medication if your glucoses are outside your goal range.
• Maintain contact with family and friends through phone calls, texts, emails or video chats. This will help to prevent feelings of isolation and stress.
• Eat healthy – Good nutrition is very important for glucose control and keeping your immune system healthy.
• Get enough sleep
• Remain active – Go for walks, work in your yard or garden, or use your home exercise equipment to stay fit and help to maintain your glucose levels.
• Manage stress – Stress affects glucose levels for most people with diabetes. Find ways to relax (read, listen to music, exercise). Seek assistance from a mental health professional to help you learn ways to cope in these challenging times.
• If you are a current smoker who wants to quit, explore your state’s free tobacco quit line.

Managing COVID-19 and Diabetes

If you experience symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath, muscle pain, chills, loss of taste or smell, vomiting or diarrhea, or sore throat in the past 14 days), call 1-877-AT-AVERA (1-877-282-8372), or call your clinic. Do not go to the clinic. Your provider will advise you if you need to get tested or seek other health care.

If you are diagnosed with COVID-19 and have diabetes:
• Continue to take all your medications as prescribed.
• Drink lots of non-calorie fluids, especially water.
• Check your blood glucose level frequently (every 2-4 hours) or more often if you use a continuous glucose monitor. Some continuous glucose monitors are sensitive to acetaminophen (Tylenol), and fingerstick glucose checks are necessary for accurate readings.
• Wash your hands and clean your injection, infusion set, and fingerstick sites with soap and water or rubbing alcohol.
• Check your urine for ketones if you have type 1 diabetes and your blood glucose is over 240 mg/dl more than 2 times in a row. Call your provider if you have ketones, as you are at risk for diabetic ketoacidosis, a potentially life threatening complication.
• Call your provider for any significant changes in your glucoses (high or low), questions or concerns. Do not hesitate to call and don’t wait too long.

COVID-19 Resources for Patients with Diabetes

• American Diabetes Association
  • www.diabetes.org/coronavirus-covid-19
• Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation
  • www.jdrf.org/coronavirus
Virtual Visits
Due to COVID-19 Avera Health Plans is waiving co-pays for AveraNow when you choose the Urgent Care option. Co-pays are waived through June 14, 2020.
• Instructions on how to use virtual visits
• AveraNow FAQs
  • https://www.averanow-rack-card-20-anow-21656.pdf
• For coverage from other insurance companies, call the number on the back of your insurance card.

Social Distancing
Guidance on social distancing, including why it’s important and effective in the fight against COVID-19.
• CDC
    • Other languages available (Spanish, Vietnamese, Korean, Chinese)
• Avera

Cloth Masks
Overview of how to properly wear a cloth mask, guidance on when to wear a cloth mask and tutorials on how to make cloth masks at home.
• CDC
    • Other languages available (Spanish, Vietnamese, Korean, Chinese)
• Avera

Handwashing
Guidance on when to wash hands and how to wash hands properly.
• CDC
  • https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html
    • Other languages available (Spanish)
• Avera

How to Protect Yourself & Others
Guidance on handwashing, social distancing, cleaning and disinfecting to protect yourself and loved ones from COVID-19.
• CDC
    • Other languages available (Spanish, Vietnamese, Korean, Chinese)
• Avera - Clearance Notes for Children
Social Distancing

To prevent spread of COVID-19 illness, Avera recommends “social distancing” as outlined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Here’s what social distancing means:

Limit close contact with people
- Limit physical contact, including handshakes
- Avoid hugging or kissing people who are sick or showing symptoms of illness, keep your distance about six feet away
- Limit in-person meetings, using phone, email and other communication tools when possible.
- Increase physical space when you are working or talking with others out in public

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 sick people in the crowd.
- Maintain at least 6 ft distance.

Reduce or limit gatherings
- Consider that now may not be the best time for parties or potlucks.
- Visiting friends and family is not recommended.

Limit non-essential travel

Stay home if you are sick
- Stay home from work, school, church or other group gatherings if you are ill with these symptoms:
  - Fever of 100° or higher
  - Cough
  - Shortness of breath
  - Sore throat
  - Muscle pain
  - Chills
  - Loss of taste or smell
  - Vomiting or diarrhea

Identify actions to take if you need to postpone or cancel events
- Officials may ask you to modify, postpone or cancel large events for the safety and well-being of your event staff, participants and the community.
- If possible, plan alternative ways for participants to enjoy the events by television, radio or online.

People who utilize Avera facilities for their health care who feel they may have been exposed to COVID-19 (coronavirus) or who are displaying symptoms are asked to call 1-877-AT-AVERA (1-877-282-8372), or contact their clinic by phone. The toll-free number is Avera’s Medical Call Center that is staffed 24/7.

At this number, people will talk to qualified staff who will discuss their concerns and symptoms and determine if that patient needs to be seen by a provider.
PREVENTION OF COVID-19 SPREAD:
SOCIAL DISTANCING

LIMIT CLOSE CONTACT WITH PEOPLE

Limit in-person meetings to your direct team, and utilize Webex, phone calls and other tools when possible

Limit physical contact, including handshakes

Limit no-essential travel

Avoid crowds (especially in poorly ventilated spaces)

WASH HANDS AND AVOID TOUCHING YOUR EYES, NOSE OR MOUTH

WATCH FOR SYMPTOMS
Symptoms may appear within 2-14 days of exposure to the virus.
In the last 14 days, have you noticed these symptoms?

Shortness of breath  Fever over 100°F  Cough  Muscle pain  Chills  Vomiting or diarrhea  Loss of taste or smell  Sore throat

For the latest updates go to Avera.org/covid-19
Cloth Masks

Wearing a cloth face mask can be helpful in stopping the spread of COVID-19. Whether you have homemade ones or bought some, daily washing can help the masks keep you safer.

Additionally, cloth masks are most beneficial for lessening mouth-hand contact or to help cover a medical mask or N-95 in order extend the life of disposable masks.

**Cloth Masks Best Practices**

- Cloth masks only help if they are carefully put on (donned) and taken off (doffed.)
- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water or use hand sanitizer, every time you touch the mask. This will really help you avoid cross-contamination.
- When you’re ready to remove a cloth mask, grab one of the ear or head loops.
- Try to avoid touching the front of the mask. Put it in your laundry to be washed – and then wash your hands.
- Wash your cloth mask after each use, or at least daily.
- Wash in hot water, but if you can’t, make sure to dry on a hot setting of your dryer.
To Don Ear Loop Cloth Mask

*Proper hand hygiene has been conducted before donning on mask

**STEP 1**
Hold mask by ear loops

**STEP 2**
Slip one loop over ear

**STEP 3A**
Slip second loop over opposite ear, adjust mask to assure mouth and nose covered.

**STEP 3B**
Slip second loop over opposite ear, adjust mask to assure mouth and nose covered.

Note: Cloth mask tends to slip less during use/talking if the lower edge of mask is aligned with jaw bone (mandible) rather than down below jaw bone.
To Don Head Loop Mask

**STEP 1**
Hold mask by grasping both head loops at edges of mask.

**STEP 2A**
Hold mask with mask facing downward, so mask is donned with chin directed into mask first.

**STEP 2B**
Hold mask with mask facing downward, so mask is donned with chin directed into mask first.

**STEP 3A**
Stretch both head loops up over crown head, and adjust loops so mask fits snugly.

**STEP 3B**
Stretch both head loops up over crown head, and adjust loops so mask fits snugly.
When Removing Either Mask for Re-use

1. Remove mask by grasping ear loops or head loops; avoid touching front of mask.
2. Place mask with outer side facing down on a clean paper towel.
3. If a common area is used for securing masks between uses, write your initials or name on paper towel to designate each person’s mask.
4. Perform hand hygiene after removing.
   a. When re-donning, use care not to touch outside of mask.
   b. Perform hand hygiene after donning.

Wash Cloth Masks after Use

If you wear your mask to work, place it in a plastic bag and take it home to launder

**Wash in regular home laundry:**

- Recommended is to wash in hot water and dry OR
- Wash in cool or warm water but dry in a hot dryer
- Wash mask after each use (or daily)
As your partner in health care who is concerned about the well-being of all people we serve, Avera stands with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in recommending that you wear a mask anytime you are near people who aren’t living in your household.

How do masks reduce the spread of COVID-19?
• Wearing face masks has been proven to reduce transmission of COVID-19 and decrease hospitalizations and deaths.
• COVID-19 is spread by respiratory droplets, even from people with no symptoms. When you wear a mask, it blocks your exhaled respiratory droplets from reaching others, and it prevents you from inhaling the respiratory droplets of others.

Can someone be medically exempt from wearing a mask?
• The CDC recommends that children younger than 2, anyone who has trouble breathing or anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove a face mask themselves should not wear a mask.

What happens if I don’t wear a mask?
• You are at increased risk for being infected with COVID-19 if you don’t wear a mask. If you cannot wear a mask, you should isolate at home.

Should my child wear a mask to school?
• Avera recommends that all staff and students wear face masks in school, with consideration to the student’s individual education plan (IEP), if necessary.

Are you safe if one person wears a mask and the other person doesn’t?
• When you wear a mask, you are protecting other people from your respiratory droplets, and protecting yourself from inhaling the respiratory droplets of others.
• If everyone wears a mask, COVID-19 can be reduced to controllable levels, preventing further waves of the pandemic.
Can people with no symptoms still spread COVID-19?
• Yes. 10% to 50% of people with COVID-19 are asymptomatic, but they can still spread COVID-19.

I’ve recovered from or been vaccinated for COVID-19. Do I still need to wear a mask?
• Yes. Until we learn more, it is still important to continue wearing a mask to ensure the safety of those around you.

Do you need to wear a mask outside? Or is it only necessary to wear a mask indoors?
• You should wear a mask anytime you are near people who aren’t living in your household.

Does wearing a mask reduce your oxygen levels?
• Using a face mask, even for a long period of time, has not been shown to cause carbon dioxide toxicity in healthy people.
• The CDC recommends that children younger than 2, anyone who has trouble breathing or anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a face mask themselves should not wear a mask.

Are cloth masks enough or does it only matter if you are wearing an N-95?
• N-95 respirators are not necessary for everyday use, and can be uncomfortable and restrictive.
• N-95s are made to protect health care workers and their patients.
• Cloth or disposable masks, when worn correctly, have been shown to keep you safe, especially when you’re also practicing social distancing and frequent hand washing.

To learn more, visit Avera.org/covid-19.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Scientific Brief: Community Use of Cloth Masks to Control the Spread of SARS-CoV2: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/more/masking-science-sars-cov2.html
Hand Hygiene

Handwashing is one of the most important steps we can take to avoid getting sick and stop the spread of germs.

There is a right way to wash your hands. When you fail to wash your hands, wash them incorrectly or don’t wash for the recommended 20 seconds, you are essentially just spreading the germs around on your hands and then to anything you touch afterwards.

**How to wash your hands correctly:**

- Turn on the faucet to warm water and get your hands wet.
- Turn the water off and put on soap.
- Once you have your soap, create a good lather without water for at least 20 seconds. This is often the step people skip – they wash their hands with the soap under the water when you should be lathering your hands outside of the water first.
- When lathering your hands, scrub the backs, fronts, between the fingers and under your nails. A good song to think of when trying to gauge 20 seconds is “Happy Birthday.” Sing this twice through and you should be close to 20 seconds.
- Turn the water back on and put your hands back under the water to rinse off the soap.
- The final step is BEFORE you turn off the faucet grab your paper towel and dry your hands completely. If there are no paper towels then dry your hands with the air dryer. You will then use the paper towel to shut off the faucet and open the bathroom door to exit before throwing your paper towel in the trash.
- If you don’t have a paper towel try to use your sleeve to open the door to prevent any germs that may be on the bathroom door handle from getting back onto your hands.
- In the event handwashing isn’t a possibility you can use hand sanitizer but this should NEVER be used to replace good handwashing practices. When using hand sanitizer it should be comprised of at least 60% alcohol; rub in the hand sanitizer until your hands are dry.

**You should wash your hands often, including:**

- Before, during and after food preparation
- Before eating
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick
- Before and after performing first aid, such as bandaging a cut
- After using the toilet, changing diapers or assisting a child who has used the toilet
- After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- After touching an animal, animal feed, animal waste or handling their food or treats
- Anytime your hands are physically dirty
- After touching garbage

HOW TO PROPERLY WASH YOUR HANDS

Handwashing properly for 20 seconds is one of the most important steps we can take to avoid getting sick and stop the spread of germs.

1. WET HANDS
2. USE SOAP
3. PALM TO PALM
4. FINGERS INTERLACED
5. BACK OF HANDS
6. BASE OF THUMBS
7. FINGERNAILS
8. WRIST
9. RINSE HANDS WITH WATER
10. DRY HANDS WITH TOWEL*

*If available, after completing 20 seconds of handwashing, turn the faucet handle with a paper towel and then discard immediately.