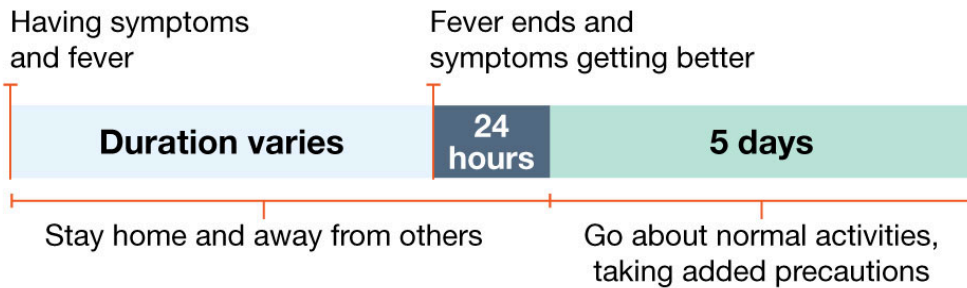


People who are at higher risk for severe illness who start to feel sick should seek health care right away so that they can access testing and/or treatment. Early treatment for COVID-19 or flu may prevent severe disease in people at higher risk, even if they are up to date with their vaccines.

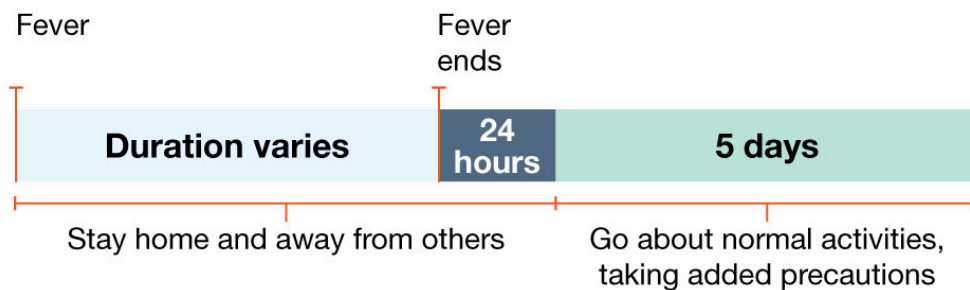
### Examples

Depending on your circumstances, here are a few examples of what updated guidance could look like if you come down with a respiratory infection:

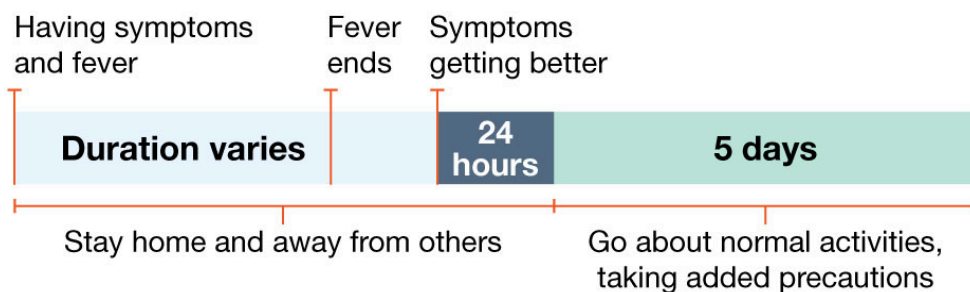
Example 1: Person with fever and symptoms.



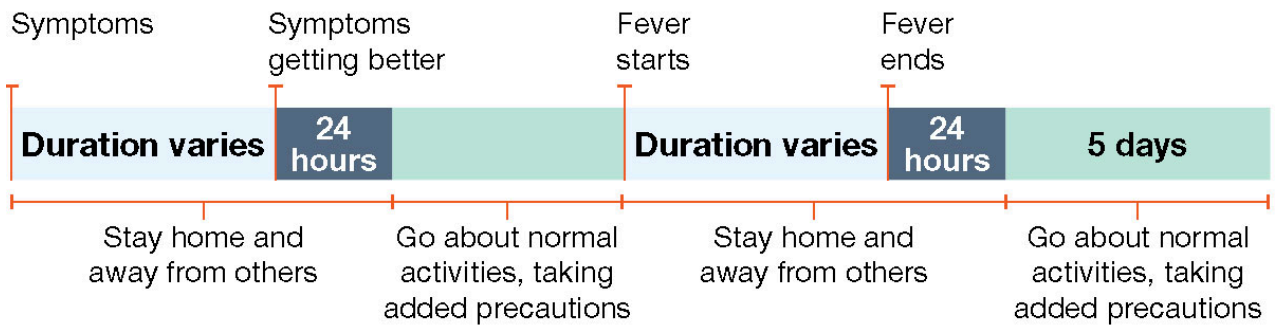
Example 2: Person with fever but no other symptoms.



Example 3: Person with fever and other symptoms, fever ends but other symptoms take longer to improve.



Example 4: Person gets better and then gets a fever.



## Why was the guidance updated?

**We are in a different place with COVID-19 than we were.**

Weekly hospital admissions for COVID-19 have decreased by more than 75% and deaths by more than 90% compared to January 2022. Importantly, these decreases have continued through a full respiratory virus season, despite levels of viral activity similar to prior years. Almost 98% of people in the United States have antibodies against COVID-19 because of prior vaccination, infection or both. We also have effective and widely available vaccines and treatment that work, but more than 95% of people hospitalized with COVID-19 this last season were not up to date on COVID-19 vaccines and most had not received antiviral treatment.

**The updated guidance change will not significantly increase COVID-19 community spread and severe disease.** Real-world experience in states like Oregon and California and countries like the UK, Australia, Denmark, France, Norway, and Canada found no significant change in spread or severe disease after implementing similar guidance updates.

**Clear, simple, and actionable guidance, regardless of the respiratory virus, will help protect Americans.** Symptoms are an easy way to know when someone should use prevention strategies. These strategies, like staying home, can be done without a test. A CDC survey found that a majority of Americans take precautions when sick with cold or cough symptoms (such as avoiding contact with people at higher risk and avoiding large indoor gatherings) even if they don't know what virus is causing the illness. Different guidance for different viruses makes it difficult to make a prevention plan when you don't know what is causing your symptoms.

### Keeping you healthy: CDC's work continues

COVID-19, flu, and RSV contribute to severe illness and disruptions in our everyday lives. CDC remains committed to protecting everyone's health, and will continue to provide information about respiratory virus activity to inform people on what actions they can take to stay healthy. This includes informing people with a range of risk factors that can increase the chance of getting very sick (severe illness). Generally, people at higher risk of severe illness from respiratory viruses are older adults, young children, people with compromised immune systems, people with disabilities, and pregnant people. CDC has included [additional guidance](#) for these populations to help protect them from severe illness.

Last Reviewed: March 1, 2024