COVID-19 is an illness caused by a virus (SARS-CoV-2) that spreads easily from person to person. It is important to protect yourself from getting COVID-19 because it can make you very sick.

Living in prisons and jails puts you at higher risk for getting COVID-19 because:

- It may be hard to stay at least 6 feet away (2 arm lengths), also called physical distancing, from other people.
- There may not be enough space to keep people with COVID-19 away from others.
- You may be sharing space with someone who has the virus and does not know it, because they are not coughing or showing other symptoms.
- Staff or visitors may have the virus and not know it.

About COVID-19

- Many people who have COVID-19 do not feel sick.
- For those who do feel sick, some signs and symptoms of COVID-19 include:
  » Fever/chills
  » New loss of taste or smell
  » Coughing
  » Sore throat
  » Feeling tired
  » Stuffy or runny nose
  » Having a hard time breathing
  » Nausea/vomiting
  » Pain in the head or body
  » Diarrhea
**How COVID-19 Spreads**

If physical distancing is not maintained, the virus may spread when a person with COVID-19 breathes, coughs, sneezes, talks, or sings.

- Droplets are formed when you breathe. These droplets can contain the virus. If people nearby breathe in the droplets, then they can get infected.
- Sometimes, droplets can stay in the air for minutes to hours and infect someone more than 6 feet away.
- Less commonly, people may get infected by the virus by touching something with the virus on it and then touching their mouth, nose, or eyes.

**People at Risk For COVID-19**

- Anyone can get infected.
- Older adults and people with certain health issues tend to get sicker with COVID-19. Some of these issues include:
  - Cancer
  - Chronic kidney disease
  - Chronic liver disease
  - COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
  - Down syndrome
  - Heart problems
  - Obesity
  - Pregnancy
  - Sickle cell disease
  - Smoking
  - Type 2 diabetes
  - Weakened immune system from solid organ transplant

If you have any of these health issues, it is more important than ever to protect yourself and get the COVID-19 vaccine when it is available to you.

**Protect Yourself and Others**

- Vaccines may keep you from getting sick, being hospitalized, or dying from COVID-19. Get a vaccine as soon as you can!
- Maintaining physical distance can protect you from different types of COVID-19 (e.g., Delta).
  - Avoid crowds as much as possible, and try to distance yourself as much as possible.
    - Recreation, especially when inside
    - Mealtime (if in a dining area with people from other units)
    - Walking in hallways
- Wear a mask that covers your nose and mouth, especially when around staff or people from a different housing unit.
- Always wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds: After coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose
  - After using the bathroom
  - Before eating
  - Before and after making food
  - Before taking medicine
Common Spaces

- Go outside for your recreation time if you can.
- Sleep head to foot if there is more than one bed in a room. This gives you more space between your face and others around you.
- If visitors are allowed, visitors may be screened for COVID-19 and asked to wear a mask.
  » Visitors may not be able to enter the building if they do not clear the screening process (for example, a temperature check), or if they decline to be screened.

If You Were Near Someone with COVID-19

- You may be tested for the virus even if you do not feel sick.
- You may be sent to an area away from others. This is called quarantine.
  » Quarantine separates people who were exposed to COVID-19 to see if they become sick.
  » This room may be a single cell or a large area with others.
  » Quarantine helps protect you from getting or spreading the virus to others.

What to Do if You Feel Sick

- Tell a correctional officer or staff member if you feel sick so you can get medical care.
- You may be sent to an area by yourself. This is called medical isolation.
  » Medical isolation separates people who may have COVID-19 from people who are not sick. This is so you don’t get others sick.
  » This room may be a single cell or a large area with others who are also sick.
  » Medical isolation is not to punish you.
- You may be tested for COVID-19.
  » If your test is positive, showing you have COVID-19, you will need to stay in medical isolation for at least 10 days.
  » If your test is negative, but you were near someone with COVID-19, you may be sent to a quarantine area to see if you develop COVID-19.
    - A negative test result means that you probably did not have COVID-19 at the time of testing or that it was too early in your infection.
    - You could be exposed to COVID-19 after being tested.
    - You may be tested again.
Resources

- Visit CDC’s “How to Protect Yourself & Others”\(^2\) webpage for more information on the important ways to slow the spread of COVID-19.

- It is natural to feel stress, grief and worry during the COVID-19 pandemic. Refer to CDC’s “Coping with Stress”\(^10\) webpage for more details on how you can help yourself and others manage stress.

* This webpage contains recommendations for people in prisons and jails. CDC acknowledges it may be difficult to maintain physical distancing and avoid crowds in these settings.

** If available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol when soap and water are not immediately available.\(^2\)

References: