



The latest on Covid-19....

SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes the disease known as “Covid-19” is still very much with us, and the surge of cases at the close of Summer 2024 was at the highest infection rates to date.

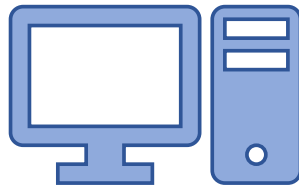
- Covid-19 is a viral illness that is transmitted by respiratory droplets that can access your body through inhalation, or if they land in your eyes, nose, or mouth, or on your hands that then touch your eyes, nose, or mouth. The most common symptoms are similar to the common cold or respiratory flu and can include: fever, chills, cough, difficulty breathing, fatigue, body aches, headache, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, nasal congestion, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea.
- Home test kits for the virus are available at all pharmacies and many grocery stores. Most people can recover from the illness at home, and current over-the-counter cold and flu medications as well as other remedies such as rest and increased fluids are adequate for managing the symptoms until the patient’s immune system successfully resolves the infection. Antibiotics are *not* effective against Covid-19 since it is not a bacterial infection. Persons diagnosed with Covid-19 should stay home and away from others for as long as they feel ill and should only return to normal activities when for *at least 24 hours* symptoms have been improving and there has been *no fever for at least 24 hours* without the use of fever-reducing medication. Continuing to wear a mask for the next 5 days will lower the risk of spreading the virus to others.

- Individuals with more severe symptoms including difficulty breathing, pain or pressure in their chest, disorientation or confusion, pale, gray or blue-colored skin, lips, or nail beds, or the inability to stay awake should seek emergency care at a hospital immediately.
- Some individuals are at **higher risk** for complications from covid-19 viral infection and these include people with the following health-related factors:
 - Age greater than 65
 - Cancer
 - Chronic kidney, lung, liver, or heart disease
 - Dementia or neurologic conditions including stroke
 - Diabetes
 - Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system)
 - Overweight or Obesity
 - Down Syndrome
 - Smoking (current or former)
 - Prior organ or bone marrow transplant
 - Substance use disorders including alcohol and opioids
- If you are in one of these high-risk groups, your health care provider may recommend prescription treatment with the anti-viral pill known as **Paxlovid**. This is a 5-day treatment that is recommended to be started within the first 5 days of symptom onset. Not all persons are recommended to take Paxlovid, as it has some drug interactions with common medications, and is also not recommended with more severe kidney disease. Common side effects include diarrhea and a metallic taste.
- The **Covid-19 vaccination** has been updated to target the more recent versions of the virus, called variants. Everyone 6 months of age or older is recommended to get a booster once annually to target the changing virus, similar to how influenza vaccines are recommended. Early autumn is a good time to plan to get your vaccination, as all respiratory illness rates tend to increase as the

weather cools down and people spend more time together inside. The Covid vaccine is safe to get on the same day as your Influenza, Pneumococcal and RSV vaccines. This vaccine is available at most local pharmacies and is covered under all commercial and Medicare health insurance plans.

If someone has contracted the Covid-19 virus, it is recommended to wait *at least 3 months* from the illness before the next booster vaccination is administered, to maximize development of immunity.

Highgate Medical Group now offering Electronic-Visits for Covid-19!



If you have a Patient Portal set up with Highgate Medical Group, you are eligible to request an E-Visit for your Covid-19 illness.

Log into your portal and request an E-visit with your healthcare provider to get the care you need without having to come in to the office! Provider completion of electronic visits is typically within 24 hours of visit submission, but may take up to 72 hours, and are not conducted on holidays or weekends.

If you have not set up your Patient Portal, your personalized access code can be obtained by calling our office to request it, or by obtaining the code at your next office visit.