



National Indian Health Board
**NATIONAL TRIBAL
COVID-19 RESPONSE**

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Tips for Health and Wellness for Tribal Elders

As an Elder you are a respected and treasured member of your community. Maintaining your community role as a Tribal elder can be challenging in these times. As our knowledge keepers, it is crucial that during this time we preserve and share the stories and traditions of your Tribe. We hope this information is helpful to you to live a healthy, balanced life. For more information about how to protect your Tribal community please visit the [National Indian Health Board COVID-19 Tribal Resource Center](#).



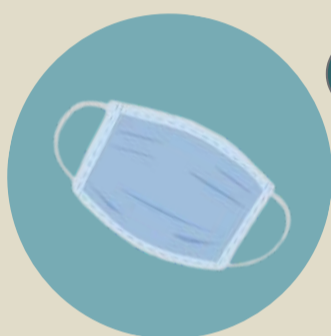
Why are Elders at Higher Risk?

Older people are more likely to have serious COVID-19 illness if they contract the virus. This may be because immune systems change with age, making it harder to fight off diseases and infection.

Older adults also are more likely to have underlying health conditions, such as diabetes or high blood pressure, that make it harder to cope with and recover from illness.

What Can Tribal Elders Do to Stay Healthy?

1. **Get vaccinated and boosted.** COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective ways to keep Elders healthy. American Indians and Alaska Natives can be vaccinated starting at six months old and throughout the lifespan.



2. **If you are not fully vaccinated,** continue to **wear a mask or cloth face covering** to protect yourself, youth, and the community. Make sure to **stay 6 feet apart from people** you don't live with and avoid crowds. You should **wash your hands often** with soap and water or use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not accessible.

3. **Stay connected to family and friends.** Connecting with youth, family, friends, and the community can help **ease feelings of stress and isolation.** Fully vaccinated Tribal citizens can resume activities such as traditional ceremonies, talking circles, drum circles, or sacred feasts without wearing a mask or physically distancing, except where required by Tribal, federal, state, or local, laws, rules, and regulations.



4. **Follow prevention recommendations.**
 - **Wash your hands often** with soap and water for at least **20 seconds.** If soap and water are not available **use hand sanitizer** that has at least **60% alcohol.**
 - **Avoid touching your face** (eyes, nose, and mouth) with unwashed hands.
 - **Regularly disinfect your home.** Clean and disinfect things you touch often.



5. **Take care of your emotional and mental health.** Reach out for support if you or someone you care about are feeling overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression, or anxiety, or other emotions.
 - Call your Tribal behavioral health center, Indian Health Services (IHS) or Tribal healthcare provider.
 - **Crisis Text Line by texting NATIVE to 741741** to be connected to a trained Crisis Counselor.
 - **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 (TALK).** The service is free, confidential and open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
 - **Crisis services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, and two-spirit (LGBTQ2S) persons** are available from the **Trevor Project at 1-866-488-7386,** 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



6. **If you feel sick or develop symptoms** such a fever, cough or shortness of breath contact your IHS or Tribal healthcare provider immediately.
 - Let a friend or family member know you are feeling sick.
 - Keep track of your symptoms.
 - Stay home, except to get health care. Avoid public areas.
 - As much as possible stay away from other people. If you are not able to, wear a mask.



For more information, or to learn more about frequently asked questions, visit the [CDC website](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/older-adults.html).
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html>



Disclaimer: This fact sheet is supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$2,000,000 with 100 percent funded by CDC/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by CDC/HHS, or the U.S. Government.

For more information, visit NIHB's National Tribal COVID-19 Response page at www.nihb.org