



Guidance for People Living with HIV During COVID-19 Surge **Updated December 13, 2021**

COVID-19 with the Delta variant is surging across the United States, including the San Francisco Bay Area. The Delta variant is more transmissible than previous variants. It may cause more serious disease. Measures to protect yourself and stop the spread of this virus are more important than ever.

Getting to Zero SF recommends you take these precautions to keep yourself and others safe during this COVID surge:

1. IF YOU ARE NOT VACCINATED, GET VACCINATED!

All people living with HIV (PLWH) are strongly recommended to get a **primary series** of COVID-19 vaccine AND a **booster**. Vaccination remains **the most powerful tool** in the fight against COVID-19, including the Delta variant. Being fully vaccinated decreases your chances of getting infected with COVID. And if you do get infected, being vaccinated reduces your chances of having severe symptoms, being hospitalized, and dying.

A **primary series** of COVID-19 vaccine consists of 1 dose of J&J or 2 doses of Moderna or Pfizer vaccine.

- Current CDC guidelines recommend a 3rd dose for PLWH who have:
 - a history of AIDS at any time in the past,
 - infections or cancer related to HIV,
 - CD4 count less than 200, or HIV viral load that is not undetectable.

Many experts suggest the additional 3rd dose for all persons with HIV based on higher vaccine breakthrough rates. PLWH should have a 3rd dose of Moderna or Pfizer vaccine 28 days after their second dose as part of their primary series.

A **booster** dose of COVID-19 should be given 6 months after the primary series is complete (or 2 months if the primary series is with J&J). We recommend everyone get a booster with either Moderna or Pfizer vaccine.

To find a convenient vaccine site near you, look [here](#) or call 628-652-2700. You can also email sfvaxnow@sfdph.org to arrange vaccination for groups of 5 or more people – they'll come to you! If you are vaccinated, talk to your friends, family and those close to you about getting vaccinated, too.

- ### **2. Wear a MASK whether you are fully vaccinated or not.**
- Masks protect you from being exposed to COVID. Masks also protect those around you if you become infected – even if you don't know it. Everyone in SF, including people who are fully vaccinated, is required



to wear a face mask indoors in public places with some exemptions per the San Francisco Department of Public [Health Order](#).

3. **Get TESTED for COVID if you have been exposed or have symptoms of COVID**, whether or not you have been vaccinated. Vaccinated persons are much less likely to get a COVID infection, but they can still get infected with COVID and transmit the virus to other individuals. Identifying COVID early can help break chains of COVID transmission in the community. Contact your provider for testing or seek testing [here](#).
4. **Maintain “social distancing,”** or *physical* distancing (6 feet or about 2 arm lengths) from people who are not in your household. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
5. **Wash your hands with soap and water frequently** and avoid touching your face. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
6. **Get an influenza vaccine (“flu shot”)** as soon as these are available.

If you have flu-like symptoms, such as fever, cough or sore throat, you should *contact* your primary provider. Of course, if you are severely ill, you should go to an emergency room.

If you are living with HIV, it’s important to control HIV with antiretroviral therapy (ART) in order to protect your immune system. You should continue to take your ART medicines every day (or start ART, if you are not already on it – discuss with your clinician). There is no evidence that any ART medications are effective against COVID-19, and there is no reason to change ART because of COVID-19. Keep a supply of all your prescription medications on hand and be sure to order refills on schedule. Let your primary provider know if you are having trouble getting your refills. If you are not able to reach your provider for refills, you may call the Ward 86 PHAST pager (415-443-3892) for assistance Monday-Friday, 9 AM-5 PM.

Remember, all these extra precautions are only temporary, and they can prevent illness and save lives. Together we will overcome this COVID surge.

References

¹ East Bay Getting to Zero **COVID-19 & HIV Updates**: <https://www.ebgtz.org/update/covid-19/#PLWHvax>

Resources

- San Francisco Department of Public Health: <https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/coronavirus.asp>



- UCSF Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Resources: <https://coronavirus.ucsf.edu/>
- Kaiser Permanente COVID-19 link: <https://mydoctor.kaiserpermanente.org/covid-19/>
- GTZ-SF [*Guidance on COVID-19 for People Living with HIV*](#), Updated 27 March 2020
- CDC [About COVID-19](#), [How to Protect Yourself & Others](#)