



### Who is at higher risk of COVID-19?

Everyone is at risk for getting COVID-19 if they are exposed to the virus. Some people are more likely than others to become severely ill. More is learned about COVID-19 every day, and the latest information is available here: "[CDC: People Who Are at Increased Risk for Severe Illness.](#)"

**As of December 23, 2020, the CDC notes that people of any age with the following conditions are at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19:**

- [Cancer](#)
- [Chronic kidney disease](#)
- [COPD \(chronic obstructive pulmonary disease\)](#)
- [Down syndrome](#)
- [Heart conditions, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, or cardiomyopathies](#)
- [Immunocompromised state \(weakened immune system\) from blood, bone marrow, or organ transplant; HIV; use of corticosteroids; or use of other immune weakening medicines](#)
- [Obesity \(body mass index \[BMI\] of 30 kg/m<sup>2</sup> or higher but < 40 kg/m<sup>2</sup>\)](#)
- [Severe Obesity \(BMI ≥ 40 kg/m<sup>2</sup>\)](#)
- [Pregnancy](#)
- [Sickle cell disease](#)
- [Smoking](#)
- [Type 2 diabetes mellitus](#)

Current clinical guidance and information from the CDC also indicates that **people who live in a nursing home or licensed long-term care facility are at risk for severe illness** from COVID-19. Residents of PA-licensed Intermediate Care Facilities (ICFs) or Personal Care Homes are not permitted to participate in Special Olympics in-person activities at this time.

The CDC notes that **children who are medically complex, who have neurologic, genetic, metabolic conditions, or who have congenital heart disease are at higher risk for severe illness** from COVID-19.

**If you have any condition the CDC notes places you at higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19 or if you live in a nursing home/licensed long-term care facility, you are not permitted to return to Special Olympics in-person activities at this time.** You are welcome and encouraged to participate in virtual activities such as "[Commit to Fit.](#)"

### **Additional factors and considerations:**

Everyone should consider the following information when determining whether they should return to SOPA activities at this time so as not to put yourself, your family, or your teammates at risk.

COVID-19 is a new disease. Currently there are limited data and information about the impact of underlying medical conditions and whether they increase the risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Based on what we know at this time, people with the following conditions might be at an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

- [Asthma \(moderate-to-severe\)](#)
- [Cerebrovascular disease \(affects blood vessels and blood supply to the brain\)](#)
- [Cystic fibrosis](#)
- [Hypertension or high blood pressure](#)
- [Immunocompromised state \(weakened immune system\) from blood or bone marrow transplant, immune deficiencies, HIV, use of corticosteroids, or use of other immune weakening medicines](#)
- [Neurologic conditions, such as dementia](#)
- [Liver disease](#)
- [Overweight \(BMI > 25 kg/m<sup>2</sup>, but < 30 kg/m<sup>2</sup>\)](#)
- [Pulmonary fibrosis \(having damaged or scarred lung tissues\)](#)
- [Thalassemia \(a type of blood disorder\)](#)
- [Type 1 diabetes mellitus](#)

The CDC also states that as you get older, your risk for severe illness from COVID-19 increases. For example, people in their 50s are at higher risk for severe illness than people in their 40s. Similarly, people in their 60s or 70s are, in general, at higher risk for severe illness than people in their 50s. The greatest risk for severe illness from COVID-19 is among those aged 85 or older.

Individuals with disabilities might be at increased risk of becoming infected or having unrecognized illness as follows:

- People who have limited mobility or who cannot avoid coming into close contact with others who may be infected, such as direct support providers and family members
- People who have trouble understanding information or practicing preventive measures, such as hand washing and social distancing
- People who may not be able to communicate symptoms of illness

The CDC notes that risk of infection (infection, not necessarily serious illness) with COVID-19 is higher for people who are in close contact with someone known to have COVID-19, such as healthcare workers, direct support providers, and household members. Other people at higher risk for infection are those who live or have recently been in an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19.

**If you have been diagnosed with COVID-19, you should consult with a healthcare professional for written medical clearance before returning to Special Olympics in person activities as serious cardiac, respiratory, and neurological issues may develop as a result of COVID-19. In the setting of prior severe illness or concerning symptoms, consider an EKG, echocardiogram and high sensitivity troponin for evaluation of myocarditis from COVID-19.**