



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

910 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE | Washington, D.C. 20003 | 202-507-4070 | [www.nihb.org](http://www.nihb.org)

7/20/2020

## How We Talk About COVID-19

During a times of emergency, it is important to ensure that all parties are using terms correctly and consistently. This brief listing here provides definitions for some common terms we are hearing during the COVID-19 response. Provided are their meanings in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic (they may have alternate meanings when used in different contexts).

- **ANTIBODY PROTECTION:** When we are infected with a virus or bacteria, our bodies naturally produce antibodies to fight off the infections. These antibodies remain in our body and can fight off a future infection or prevent further infection completely. Research is not yet clear on the level of protection that SARS-CoV-2 antibodies provide against re-infection.
- **ANTIBODY TESTING:** This type of test locates antibodies in the blood that have been produced by the body in response to the presence of SARS-CoV-2. This test may show if a person has been infected with SARS-CoV-2 in the past, however this test cannot show that if a person is currently infected with SARS-CoV-2 right now, or be used to diagnose COVID-19.
- **CONTACT TRACING:** A method used to identify people who may have been in contact with an infected person to prevent further spread of an infectious disease within a community.
- **CAUTION FATIGUE:** This is when a person understands the actions needed to be cautious and protect their health, but are willing to stop doing them because they think it is just too exhausting or overwhelming.
- **COMPASSION FATIGUE:** A condition characterized by emotional and physical exhaustion leading to a diminished ability to empathize or feel compassion for others. Those who are shouldering the responsibility of providing care to others may feel compassion fatigue.
- **COVID-19:** COVID-19 (“Coronavirus Disease 2019”) is the disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.
- **CURFEW:** A rule requiring people to remain indoors between specific hours.
- **FACE COVERING:** Any of a variety of masks, respirators, or clothes that cover the nose and mouth completely, and prevent any droplets (e.g., when a person coughs or sneezes) from escaping.



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

910 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE | Washington, D.C. 20003 | 202-507-4070 | [www.nihb.org](http://www.nihb.org)

7/20/2020

- **HERD IMMUNITY:** When a large part of the population of an area is immune or highly resistant to a specific cause of disease, such as a virus or bacteria. Without people to infect and thusly transmit the infection, the disease eventually dissipates. Herd immunity is the result of widespread vaccination and natural antibody protection provided by our bodies from previous infections.
- **IMMUNITY:** The body's ability to resist an infection from organisms.
- **LOCKDOWN:** An emergency measure in which people are temporarily prevented from entering or leaving an area. Buildings, areas, or whole jurisdictions can be placed on lockdown.
- **SELF ISOLATION:** When an individual separates them self and has no physical contact with others. A person can self-isolate if they think that they may have been exposed to an infectious disease to prevent any transmission to others, or if they wish to prevent a potential exposure completely.
- **SOCIAL / PHYSICAL DISTANCING:** Social (or physical) distancing is a way to keep people from interacting closely to prevent spread of an infectious disease. In the case of COVID-19, people have been asked to try to remain at least 6 feet from other people, and avoid gathering in groups larger than 10 people.
- **SPIKE:** A sudden increase and subsequent decline in disease cases over a defined period of time. This change in cases can be associated with an outbreak or epidemic. Since spikes include both an increase and decrease, they can only be identified after they have passed.
- **SURGE:** A steady increase, oftentimes unexpected, in the numbers of new infections of a given infectious disease or condition.
- **PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY:** The idea that people choose or cause their own actions or behaviors, and are thusly responsible for the outcome of those decisions. Many public health intervention and preventative activities (including social/physical distancing and wearing face coverings) rely upon an individual's sense of personal responsibility.
- **QUARANTINE:** When people are put in isolation for a designated period of time if they have been exposed to an infectious disease, or have an active infection. They may not feel sick or have symptoms, but the fact that they have been exposed calls for a quarantine. This state reduces the chances that someone might pass an illness on to others without knowing it.



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

910 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE | Washington, D.C. 20003 | 202-507-4070 | [www.nihb.org](http://www.nihb.org)

7/20/2020

- **RISK OF INFECTION:** Risk of infection refers to a population's or individual's susceptibility to a pathogen such as a virus. Being at higher risk means that a population or person is more likely to get a particular disease or condition. People of all ages and backgrounds can be infected by COVID-19, however, some groups are at an increased risk of infection due to a variety of factors such as housing and employment (social determinants of health). Essential works such as grocery store employees, bus drivers, health care providers and health facility staff and other front line works interact with others outside of their homes and are at a higher risk of infection. Another example of a group at an increased risk are those that are experiencing homelessness or housing insecure because they may be in close contact with those who might be infected while in shelters or receiving assistance.
- **RISK OF MORTALITY:** Risk of mortality refers to the likelihood of death occurring. Based on what is known, persons with COVID-19 at higher risk or likelihood for severe illness and/or death are those who are age 65 years or older; have pre-existing conditions such as diabetes, asthma, chronic lung disease, kidney disease, liver disease, serious heart conditions or obesity; or are immunocompromised.
- **SAFE(R) AT HOME:** These orders request people to remain in or around their homes except for trips deemed important. These orders are less restrictive than stay at home orders, and usually allow for non-essential businesses to open with limited capacity.
- **SARS-CoV-2:** The name of the specific virus that infects humans and causes COVID-19 disease.
- **SHELTER IN PLACE:** Orders typically issued during a natural or manmade disaster. These orders require an individual to seek shelter wherever they are (e.g., at home, at school, in a car) and stay there until the immediate threat has been resolved, removed, or passed.
- **SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH:** Refers to the conditions in the places where people live, learn, work, and play that affect a wide range of health risks and outcomes. Examples of social determinants of health include housing, income, employment, safety, education, discrimination, and gender are all social determinants of health.
- **CASE COUNTS:** As of April 14, 2020, CDC case counts include both confirmed and probable cases. A confirmed case or death is confirmed by laboratory (lab) evidence for COVID-19. A probable case or death is either meeting clinical criteria AND epidemiologic evidence with no confirmatory COVID-19 lab testing; meeting presumptive lab evidence AND either clinical criteria OR epidemiologic evidence; or meeting vital records criteria with no confirmatory COVID-9 lab testing performed.





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

910 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE | Washington, D.C. 20003 | 202-507-4070 | [www.nihb.org](http://www.nihb.org)

7/20/2020

- **STAY AT HOME:** ‘Stay at home’ typically means that individuals should remain within their homes as a preventative measure and leave their houses only for essential trips. These include grocery shopping, picking up medicines, going to work (in the case of essential staff), and exercise. Essential trips do not include visiting people in their homes or attending physical gatherings (parties, in-person religious services, in-person ceremonies, etc.). Many jurisdictions issued stay at home orders that included punitive measures (like fines) for people who violated the restrictions.
- **VACCINE:** A substance used to stimulate the production of antibodies and provide immunity against a disease or an infection. Vaccines are usually made from elements of the causative agent of a disease, its products, or a synthetic substitute.
- **VIRAL TESTING:** This is the test is used to diagnose COVID-19 by looking for SARS-CoV-2 RNA, the genetic material for the virus that causes COVID-19 illness. This test shows if a person has COVID-19 right now, not if he/she/they have had it in the past. This is the most common test for SARS-CoV-2.

**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](http://www.nihb.org)