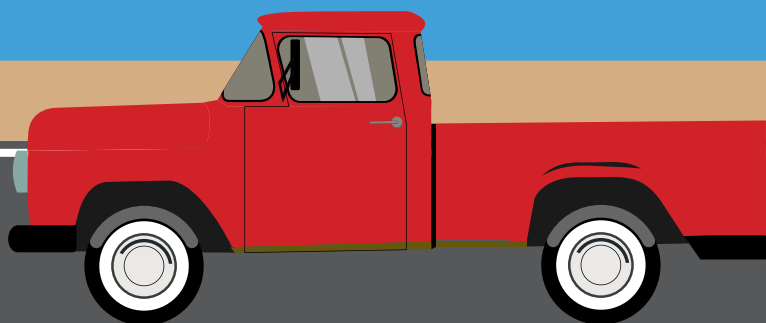


Turning the Corner on COVID-19: What Community Members Need To Know

With COVID-19 cases declining to low levels across Indian Country, it can feel like the pandemic is now behind us. However, COVID-19 is still spreading in our communities and new variants are still emerging that could spread more quickly or cause more severe illness.

Pandemics often end when diseases become “endemic.” Endemic diseases continue to make people sick, but in a predictable fashion, like the seasonal flu.



Is the pandemic over?

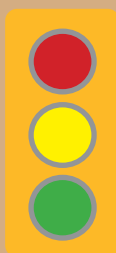
No. COVID-19 is still considered a pandemic by health experts. A pandemic is a disease that spreads globally and can cause an uncontrollable rise in cases. COVID-19 is still spreading in our communities and can still produce new, dangerous variants in the future.

That's why it's still important to get vaccinated and follow local guidance for wearing a mask to stay safe.



Will COVID-19 ever go away?

Probably not. While the pandemic will end, COVID-19 will likely stick around as an “endemic” disease, meaning it will continue to infect people, but not cause the disruptive spikes in cases we've seen over the last 2 years. Think of the spread of COVID-19 as a stoplight. Currently, we are stopped at a red light as COVID-19 spreads and new variants develop. But as COVID-19 becomes more manageable, the light will turn yellow and we can start to move again, but with caution.



Will COVID-19 be less dangerous after it becomes endemic?

No. “Endemic” does not mean “less dangerous.” HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria are all considered endemic and they remain some of the deadliest diseases globally.

Though it may not spread as quickly, COVID-19 will likely still cause similar symptoms in the future. Fortunately, we have many tools to keep hospitalizations low, like vaccines and antiviral medications. However, it is important to remember that COVID-19 will remain very dangerous for children and adults who cannot receive the vaccine or have weakened immune systems.



How can I continue to stay safe?

COVID-19 will likely be a part of our lives for a long time and new, dangerous variants may still emerge. That's why it's important to continue to stay up to date with your COVID-19 vaccine and continue to follow local guidance on wearing a mask.

