



# Healthy Aging in Neighborhoods of Diversity across the Life Span

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## The Healthy Journey

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### COVID-19 vaccine

COVID-19 is a highly contagious respiratory virus. Older adults and people with underlying medical conditions have higher risks for COVID-19 complications. The COVID-19 vaccines available today are Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson. Vaccination is the best protection against COVID-19.

The Baltimore City Health Department has mobile vaccination teams. These teams travel to people’s homes to give them a COVID-19 vaccine. This service is free of charge. If you’d like to “Vax at Home,” you can schedule an appointment by visiting <https://covidlink.maryland.gov/content/vaccine/> or calling 443-984-8650. You can call Maryland Access Point at 410-396-2273 to schedule.

You can also visit a vaccination site for your COVID-19 vaccine. You can schedule an appointment by calling 855-MD-GOVAX (855-634-6829) or by visiting [www.covidvax.maryland.gov](http://www.covidvax.maryland.gov). You can also refer to previous HANDLS newsletters (<https://handls.nih.gov/news/2021-1.pdf> and

<https://handls.nih.gov/news/2021-4.pdf>) for more details about the types of vaccines.

### What is the Delta variant?

All viruses change over time. This process is called mutation. A mutation is a change in a virus’s genetic material. This process causes variants, or strains. The COVID-19 virus has changed over time, and now variants exist. Delta is an example of a COVID-19 variant.


Delta is more contagious than other strains of coronavirus. According to the CDC, Delta may cause more severe illness than other strains of COVID-19. People are more likely to be hospitalized by Delta compared to previous strains of COVID-19. Unvaccinated people have the highest risk of infection. Vaccination is the best protection against COVID-19 and the Delta variant.

To learn more about the Delta variant, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/variants/delta-variant.html>.

**The Delta variant is more contagious than previous strains—it may cause more than 2x as many infections**

ORIGINAL COVID-19 STRAIN	DELTA VARIANT

Vaccines protect you from hospitalization, severe infections, and death



[cdc.gov/coronavirus](http://cdc.gov/coronavirus)

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### Support for grief and loss

Grief and loss are linked to many emotions. Feeling sad, anger, fear, or guilt are common. Everyone’s experiences are unique. People cope in different ways. Grief can feel overwhelming. Many people seek support from others such as loved ones, professionals, and faith groups.

COVID-19 has changed the way many people experience loss. For example, many people were unable to visit their loved ones at the end of life. Stay-at-home orders and social distancing made it difficult for people to gather for services and funerals. Many people have been feeling lonely and isolated. It’s been challenging to find support and connection during times of loss.

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Local resources are available to people who are grieving. If you or someone you know needs support after a loss, these resources may help.

**Pro Bono Counseling Project.** The Pro Bono Counseling Project offers free therapy in Maryland. Licensed volunteer therapists are trained to support those who are grieving. Help is available for individuals, couples, and families. Contact <https://probonocounseling.org/> or call 410-825-1001.

### **Roberta's House**

Roberta's House is a grief support center serving adults, children, and families. Offerings are designed to support a variety of needs and experiences. Programs are available for people who are preparing to experience loss, and for people who have already experienced a loss. Support groups and events are available through in-person and virtual options. Visit this link to explore the upcoming programs at Roberta's House: <https://robertashouse.org/calendar/>. Visit <https://robertashouse.org/> or ☎410-235-6633 or ✉[info@robertashouse.org](mailto:info@robertashouse.org). Location: 928 E North Ave., Baltimore, Maryland 21202.

Local resources are available to help you cope with grief.

**The Counseling Center at Stella Maris.** The Center provides counseling and educational services for people coping with grief and loss. Loss is a broad term and includes the death of a loved one, personal experience of chronic illness or cognitive decline, life transitions, changes in relationships, and much more. Services at Stella Maris include individual and family counseling for various age groups, information on grief, and support groups. Stella Maris serves those living in Baltimore and surrounding counties. In-person and telehealth options are available. Contact <https://stellamaris.org/healthservices/resources-counseling/> or 410-252-4500 ext. 7291. Location: 2300 Dulany Valley Rd., Timonium, MD 21093

**GriefShare.** GriefShare is a website that lists grief recovery support groups that meet weekly in Baltimore. Current and future groups are listed, all in Baltimore City. Some groups are in-person, and others provide virtual options during COVID19. Groups are either free or offered at a low cost. For information about groups in Baltimore City, visit <https://www.griefshare.org/countries/us/states/md/cities/baltimore>. If you do not live in Baltimore but would like to use GriefShare to find a group in your area, visit <https://www.griefshare.org/> and enter

your zip code to find a local group. Contact 1-800-395-5755 or email [info@griefshare.org](mailto:info@griefshare.org).

**Baltimore County Government Local Support Groups.** If you live in Baltimore County, local bereavement and support groups are available. Some are free and some have a small fee. To learn more, visit <https://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/Agencies/aging/caregivers/support-groups.html>.

**The Family Bereavement Center—Office of the State's Attorney for Baltimore City.** Since 1990, The Family Bereavement Center (FBC) has supported family members of individuals murdered in Baltimore City. Staff members include licensed therapists and bereavement advocates. Bilingual services are available. The FBC offers individual, family, and group grief counseling. The center also offers victim assistance such as court support, court escort to legal proceedings, and more. Contact <https://www.stattorney.org/resources/victims-witnesses/the-family-bereavement-center> or call 443-984-6244 or email Kim Holmes, Bereavement Coordinator [kholmes@stattorney.org](mailto:kholmes@stattorney.org).

**Maryland Department of Aging.** The MD Department of Health has compiled educational resources for people who are experiencing grief and loss. Visit <https://aging.maryland.gov/accesspoint/Pages/grief-recovery.aspx>.

**American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.** The Foundation lists suicide bereavement support groups on their website. If you lost a loved one to suicide, visit <https://afsp.org/find-a-support-group/> to find support group options offered in your area.

**Community Grief Resources and Support.** The Living Legacy Foundation of Maryland sponsors these resources. They provide grief education and local referrals on their website. For information on support groups in Maryland, visit <https://www.cgras.org/peer-led-support-groups>. For information on counseling services in Maryland, visit <https://www.cgras.org/counseling>. For online support, visit <https://www.cgras.org/online-support>. You may also search “Community Grief Resources and Support” on Facebook to learn about events and learn about grief.

**HANDLS.** Participants may contact us for help finding a referral for a licensed therapist or grief support group in your area. Email [HANDLS@mail.nih.gov](mailto:HANDLS@mail.nih.gov) or call 443-431-0909 to speak with a clinical staff member who can help you locate supportive counseling services.

## Community resources to alleviate hardships

People have been facing many hardships during COVID-19. It has been harder to afford necessities such as food, healthcare, and housing. Baltimore offers many resources that may help.

### **Rental & housing assistance.**

- The Emergency Rental Assistance Program aids tenants with current or past due payments. If you need help, contact the Maryland Emergency Rental Assistance Call Center at 877-546-5595 (Monday to Friday: 8AM to 7PM, Saturdays: 9AM to 4PM). You can also learn more by visiting <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Pages/EvictionPrevention/default.aspx>.
- If you have a legal problem threatening your housing and cannot afford a lawyer, contact the St. Ambrose Housing Aid Center. They provide advice and representation for landlord-tenant disputes, foreclosure defense, and more. Call 410-366-8550 x249, email [legal@stambros.org](mailto:legal@stambros.org), or visit <https://www.stambros.org/pages/legal-services.html> for more information.
- The Pro Bono Resource Center of Maryland has a Tenant Volunteer Lawyer of the Day Program. If you have received a failure to pay rent complaint and need to appear in court, this program will pair you with a volunteer lawyer to represent you at your hearing. This program also gives referrals to tenants who are having housing problems. Services through this program are free of charge. For more information, call 410-837-9379 or visit <https://probonomd.org/project/courtroom-advocacy/#tvld>.
- If you have received an eviction notice, you could be eligible for Baltimore City's Rental Assistance Program. If you are eligible for this program, you can receive up to 12 months of back-rent assistance. To learn how to apply, call 410-396-5555, email [eviction.prevention@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:eviction.prevention@baltimorecity.gov) or visit <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5f2823f04941a22b9876e21d/t/6078421a2b3546320bb56762/1618493978201/EvictionPrevention-041521.pdf>.

**Legal Assistance.** The Enoch Pratt Free Library has 22 branches throughout Baltimore City. The library, in partnership with Maryland Legal Aid, offers free one-on-one legal advice through the Lawyer in the Library resource. If you need help with topics like child custody or support, housing, debt collection, bankruptcy, or unemployment benefits, you may find this resource helpful. To learn more, visit <https://www.prattlibrary.org/services/lawyer-in-the-library>, email [virtualcommunitylawyer@mdlab.org](mailto:virtualcommunitylawyer@mdlab.org), or call 443-451-2805.

### **Social Services Assistance.**

- The Enoch Pratt Free Library, in partnership with University of Maryland School of Social Work and Morgan State University School of Social - Field Education Program, providing access to social services. The Social

Worker in the Library resource provides free one-on-one advising from a social worker. This is currently a virtual program. Email [socialworker@prattlibrary.org](mailto:socialworker@prattlibrary.org) to get help with topics like access to public assistance, referrals to housing, financial assistance, and resources for seniors. To learn more, visit <https://www.prattlibrary.org/services/social-worker-in-the-library>.

- The Maryland Department of Aging has a free Senior Call Check Program. This program gives peace of mind by checking in on seniors who live alone. You can receive daily text messages and a weekly call, scheduled at your convenience. Register by calling 1-866-50-CHECK or online at <https://aging.maryland.gov/Pages/senior-call-check.aspx>.

**Food Assistance.** My Groceries to Go is a program for Baltimore City residents aged 60 and over. It promotes healthy eating and nutrition education. If you are eligible, you will receive approximately 40lbs of food each month. You must register with the Maryland Food Bank to see if you are eligible. For help, call 410-737-8282 or 1-844-627-5465. You can also visit <https://mdfoodbank.org/hunger-in-maryland/approach/programs/my-groceries-to-go/>.

### **Utilities assistance.**

- Water4All is a water billing discount program for Baltimore City residents. This program protects people from cut-offs if they are unable to pay a water bill. Renters and homeowners can apply for assistance starting in Fall 2021. To fill out an interest form, call 410-396-5555, email [Water4All@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:Water4All@baltimorecity.gov), or visit <https://cityservices.baltimorecity.gov/Water4All/>. You may also call 410-396-9500 to request a paper copy of the form.
- The Maryland Department of Human Services - Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP) offers energy assistance to MD residents. OHEP provides bill assistance and helps prevent the loss of energy services in your home. Grants provided by OHEP include the Maryland Energy Assistance Program, Electric Universal Service Program, and Arrearage Retirement Assistance. Additional services such as the Utility Service Protection Program and Weatherization and Energy Efficiency Services are available too. Call 410-396-5555, email [OHEP@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:OHEP@baltimorecity.gov), or visit <https://dhs.maryland.gov/office-of-home-energy-programs/> for more information.

## Contacting HANDLS

Did you know that HANDLS has an email address? Email is a great way to keep in touch with our team. If you'd like to be added to the HANDLS email list, please message us at [handls@mail.nih.gov](mailto:handls@mail.nih.gov). We look forward to hearing from you!

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## **Newsletter for the HANDLS community**

The purpose of this study is to learn about changes in health over time. Using our medical research vehicles, we want to study as many people with different backgrounds as we can. We want this study to help us understand healthy aging by examining the influences of different backgrounds on changes in health over time. The information we gather will help improve health and prevent disabilities. Our goal is to gather information to improve health and prevent disabilities for people of all backgrounds, particularly in minority communities and communities with limited resources.

**For information about our study call 877-677-9538 or visit our website <https://handls.nih.gov>.**