I've always been a cautious girl, looking out for myself and others.

I've always been clean, taking care of myself and my health.

It had never been hard, and my habits had never been drastic.

Then, a pandemic hit, and my life changed.

I've always washed my hands and I've always covered my cough.

I've always kept my distance from people, I've always believed my gut.

I've always valued cleanliness and the safety of my health.

Now, it feels like life or death. I must be clean or the people I love will die.

I must wear my mask anywhere I go and remain attentive to the distance between me and others.

I must always wash my hands and clean every surface before and after touching it.

I must always shop online and eat at home because I don't trust other people.

I must change my clothes when I come home because germs follow me around like parasites.

I must do all of this because people are depending on my safety for theirs.

COVID made me sick in an unconventional way. This disease turned me into a germaphobe.

It's been four years since the first outbreak of COVID.

I've been vaccinated five times, but I still have worries.

I still keep my distance. I still clean everything, always.

COVID turned the cautious girl I was turned into an anxious young woman.

My habits will follow me forever.