

Frequently Asked Questions
Updated March 13, 2020

What is a “coronavirus?”

A coronavirus is a family of viruses that cause diseases ranging from the common cold to more serious respiratory illness. Among humans, coronaviruses are most commonly spread from an infected person to others through coughing and sneezing, close personal contact, and touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching one’s mouth, nose, or eyes before handwashing. There is no cure for a coronavirus, but many of the symptoms can often be treated.

I’ve heard this virus referred to as a “novel coronavirus.” What does that mean?

There are different types of coronavirus. A “novel coronavirus” means that this coronavirus hasn’t been seen before. It’s new.

How does COVID-19 spread?

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person:

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet)
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes

People are thought to be most contagious when they are the most symptomatic (the sickest).

It may also be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes.

What are the symptoms of the novel coronavirus?

Patients with COVID-19 have had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of:

- fever
- cough
- shortness of breath

At this time, the CDC believes that symptoms of COVID-19 may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure.

How can I protect myself and others against the novel coronavirus?

Do the same things you would do to prevent getting or spreading the common flu. These include:

- Stay home when you are sick.
- People who have been sick should be fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medications) before returning to school or work.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Limit close contact, like high-fiving, hugging, kissing and sharing cups or utensils, with people who are sick.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. If you do not have a tissue, use your sleeve (not your hands).
- Get a flu shot to prevent influenza if you have not done so this season.

Are children more susceptible to the virus that causes COVID-19 compared with the general population and how can infection be prevented?

No, there is no evidence that children are more susceptible. In fact, most confirmed cases of COVID-19 reported from China have occurred in adults. Limited reports of children with COVID-19 in China have described cold-like symptoms, such as fever, runny nose, and cough. These limited reports suggest that children with confirmed COVID-19 have generally presented mild symptoms, and though severe complications have been reported, they appear to be uncommon. Children should engage in usual preventive actions to avoid infection, including cleaning hands often using soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer, avoiding people who are sick, and staying up to date on vaccinations, including influenza vaccine.

What should I do if I think I have been exposed to the novel coronavirus?

If you have had close contact with someone who is confirmed to have, or being evaluated for, COVID-19 infection, or you live or have recently traveled to an area with ongoing spread, you should:

- Monitor your health starting from the day you first had close contact with the person and continue for 14 days after you last had close contact with the person. Watch for these signs and symptoms:
 - Fever of 100.4°F/38°C or higher—Take your temperature twice a day.
 - Coughing
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing.
 - Other early symptoms to watch for are chills, body aches, sore throat, headache, diarrhea, nausea/vomiting, and runny nose.
- If you develop any of these symptoms, stay home and call your healthcare provider right away. Tell them about recent travel or contact. Your healthcare provider will determine if you need to be tested for COVID-19. Follow instructions provided by your healthcare provider.
 - If you do not have a healthcare provider, call 211 for assistance finding support near you.
- People who are mildly ill with COVID-19 are able to isolate themselves at home during their illness. You should restrict activities outside your home, except for getting medical care. Do not go to work, school, or public areas. Avoid using public transportation, ride-sharing, or taxis.

- Separate yourself from other people and animals in your home- as much as possible, you should stay in a specific room and away from other people in your home. Also, you should use a separate bathroom, if available.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes
- Wash your hands often
- Avoid sharing personal household items
- Clean all “high touch” surfaces everyday
- Monitor your symptoms - seek prompt medical attention if your illness worsens. Call your health care in advance of seeking medical care and following their instructions.
- Discontinuing home isolation- Patients with confirmed COVID-19 should remain under home isolation precautions until the risk of secondary transmission to others is thought to be low. The decision to discontinue home isolation precautions should be made on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with healthcare providers and state and local health departments.
- If you do not have any symptoms, you can continue with your daily activities, such as going to work, school, or other public areas.

The CDC has up-to-date information on [what to do if you are sick with COVID-19](#).

I have upcoming plans to travel, what should I do?

At this time, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that people avoid all nonessential travel to China, Iran, South Korea, and most of Europe. Check their [Coronavirus Disease 2019 Information for Travel](#) for up-to-date travel restrictions and recommendations. The CDC recommends that older adults or those who have chronic medical conditions consider postponing all travel. If you are traveling, taking regular steps to prevent the spread of respiratory infections, like the flu, will also help to prevent coronaviruses.

With the growing number of cases globally of COVID-19 we encourage everyone to follow the CDC recommendations when returning to school after travel.

Families returning from countries identified as Level 2 or 3 in the CDC travel warnings should notify their school leader and self-quarantine at home for a period of 14 days, returning only when symptom-free.

Should students and school staff wear masks to protect themselves?

No, masks are not recommended. They are not an effective method of general prevention. Handwashing provides better protection from infectious diseases.

What is Social Distancing?

Social distancing is a practice recommended by public health officials to stop or slow down the spread of contagious diseases. It requires the creation of physical space between individuals who may spread certain infectious diseases. The key is to minimize the number of gatherings as



much as possible and to achieve space between individuals when events or activities cannot be modified, postponed, or canceled.