

# Understanding Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness. It's caused by a new (novel) coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2. There are many types of coronavirus. Coronaviruses are a very common cause of bronchitis. They may sometimes cause lung infection (pneumonia). Symptoms can range from mild to severe respiratory illness. These viruses are also found in some animals. COVID-19 was first found in people in Wuhan, China, in late 2019. In 2020, COVID-19 is present in the U.S. COVID-19 is a rapidly- emerging infectious disease. This means that scientists are actively researching it. There are information updates regularly.

Public health officials are working to find the source. How the virus spreads is not yet fully understood, but it seems to spread and infect people fairly easily. Some people who have been infected in an area may be unsure how or where they became infected. The virus may be spread through droplets of fluid that a person coughs or sneezes into the air. It may be spread if you touch a surface with virus on it, such as a handle or object, and then touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.

For the latest information, visit the CDC website at [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov). Or call 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636).

## What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Some people have no symptoms or mild symptoms. Symptoms may appear 2 to 14 days after contact with the virus. Symptoms can include:

- Fever
- Coughing
- Trouble breathing

## What are possible complications from COVID-19?

In many cases, this virus can cause infection (pneumonia) in both lungs. In some cases, this can cause death. Certain people are at higher risk for complications. This includes older adults and people with serious chronic health conditions such as heart or lung disease or diabetes.

## How is COVID-19 diagnosed?

Your healthcare provider will ask about your symptoms. He or she will also ask about your recent travel and contact with sick people. If your healthcare provider thinks you may have COVID-19, he or she will work closely with your local health department on testing. Follow all instructions from your healthcare provider. COVID-19 is diagnosed by:

- **Nose and throat swab.** A cotton-tipped swab is wiped inside your nose or throat. This is done to check for viruses in your nasal mucus.
- **Sputum culture.** A small sample of mucus coughed from your lungs (sputum) is collected if you have a cough. It's checked for the virus.

## How is COVID-19 treated?

There is currently no medicine to treat the virus. Treatment is done to help your body while it fights the virus. This is known as supportive care. Supportive care may include:

- **Pain medicine.** These include acetaminophen and ibuprofen. They are used to help ease pain and reduce fever.
- **Bed rest.** This helps your body fight the illness.

For severe illness, you may need to stay in the hospital. Care during severe illness may include:

- **IV (intravenous) fluids.** These are given through a vein to help keep your body hydrated.
- **Oxygen.** Supplemental oxygen or ventilation with a breathing machine (ventilator) may be given. This is done so you get enough oxygen in your body.

### **Are you at risk for COVID-19?**

You are at risk for infection if you've been to a place where people have been sick with this virus or if there are people with COVID-19 in your area. You are at risk if you:

- Recently traveled to an area with a COVID-19 outbreak
- Had contact with a sick person who recently traveled to an area with a COVID-19 outbreak
- Had contact with a person who was diagnosed with or who may have COVID-19

### **How can COVID-19 be prevented?**

There is no vaccine yet. The best prevention is to not have contact with the virus. The CDC advises that people should not travel to areas where there are COVID-19 outbreaks right now for any reason that is not urgent. For the most current CDC travel advisories, visit the CDC website at [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers).



The CDC advises that you **should not** wear a facemask if you are not sick.

#### **Prepare and protect yourself from COVID-19:**

- Wash your hands often with soap and clean, running water for at least 20 seconds.
- If you don't have access to soap and water, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer often. Make sure it has at least 60% alcohol.
- Don't touch your eyes, nose, or mouth unless you have clean hands.
- As much as possible, don't touch "high-touch" public surfaces such as doorknobs. Don't shake hands.
- Clean home and work surfaces often with disinfectant.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue, then throw the tissue into the trash. If you don't have tissues, cough or sneeze into the bend of your elbow.
- Stay informed about COVID-19 in your area. Follow local instructions about being in public. Be aware of events in your community that may be postponed or canceled such as school and sporting events. You may be advised not to attend public gatherings. You will be advised to stay about 6 feet from others as much as possible. This is called "social distancing."
- Check your home supplies. Consider keeping a 2-week supply of medicines, food, and other needed household items.
- Make a plan for childcare, work, and ways to stay in touch with others. Know who will help you if you get sick.
- Don't be around people who are sick.
- There is no evidence right now that animals spread SARS-CoV-2. But it's always a good idea to wash your hands after touching any animals. Don't touch animals that may be sick.
- Don't share eating or drinking utensils with sick people.
- Don't kiss someone who is sick.

#### **If you were in an area with COVID-19 in the last 14 days:**

- Call your healthcare provider and follow all instructions. Your activities and where you go may be restricted for up to 2 weeks.
- Take your temperature every morning and evening for at least 14 days. This is to check for fever. Keep a record of the readings.
- Watch for symptoms of the virus. Call your provider if you have symptoms. Call your provider first before going to any clinic or hospital.
- Stay home if you are sick for any reason.

### **If you are sick with COVID-19 symptoms:**

- **Stay home.** Call your healthcare provider and tell them you have symptoms of COVID-19. Do this before going to any hospital or clinic. Follow your provider's instructions. You may be advised to isolate yourself at home. This is called self-isolation or self-quarantine.
- Don't panic. Keep in mind that other illnesses can cause similar symptoms.
- Stay away from work, school, and public places. Limit physical contact with family members. Limit visitors. Don't kiss anyone or share eating or drinking utensils. Clean surfaces you touch with disinfectant. This is to help prevent the virus from spreading.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue, then throw away the tissue in the trash. If you don't have tissues, cough or sneeze into the bend of your elbow.
- Wear a facemask only if you have symptoms
- If you need to go in to a hospital or clinic, expect that the healthcare staff will wear protective equipment such as masks, gowns, gloves, and eye protection. You may be put in a separate room. This is to prevent the possible virus from spreading.
- Tell the healthcare staff about recent travel. This includes local travel on public transport. Staff may need to find other people you have been in contact with.
- Follow all instructions the healthcare staff give you.

### **If you have been diagnosed with COVID-19**

- **Stay home.** Don't leave your home unless you need to get medical care. Don't go to work, school, or public areas. Don't use public transportation or taxis.
- Follow all instructions from your healthcare provider. Call your healthcare provider's office before going. They can prepare and give you instructions. This will help prevent the virus from spreading.
- If you need to go to a hospital or clinic, expect that the healthcare staff will wear protective equipment such as masks, gowns, gloves, and eye protection. You may be put in a separate room. This is to prevent the possible virus from spreading.
- Wear a face mask. This is to protect other people from your germs. If you are not able to wear a mask, your caregivers should.
- Stay away from other people in your home.
- Limit contact with pets and animals. Although there are no reports of pets getting sick with COVID-19, consider limiting contact with pets until more is known.
- Don't share household items or food.
- Cover your face with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue away. Then wash your hands.
- Wash your hands often.

### **If you are caring for a sick person:**

- Follow all instructions from healthcare staff.

- Wash your hands often.
- Wear protective clothing as advised.
- Make sure the sick person wears a mask. If they can't wear a mask, don't stay in the same room with the person. If you must be in the same room, wear a facemask.
- Keep track of the sick person's symptoms.
- Clean surfaces, fabrics, and laundry thoroughly.
- Keep other people and pets away from the sick person.

## **When to call your healthcare provider**

Call your healthcare provider:

- If you've recently traveled or have been in an area with COVID-19 and have symptoms
- If you have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and your symptoms are worse

*Date last modified: 3/16/2020*