COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions

What is coronavirus and where did it come from?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Some cause illness in people and others cause illness in animals, including camels, cats, and bats. In some cases, the viruses that cause illness in animals can spread to humans. In December 2019, China notified the World Health Organization of several cases of lung disease (*human respiratory illness*), which were linked to an open seafood and livestock market in the city of Wuhan. The link to the seafood and livestock market suggests that the virus may have spread from animals to humans. However, since that first outbreak in December, the virus spreads from person to person. Scientists determined that this illness is caused by a new respiratory virus. At first, the name of the virus was "novel" (meaning new) coronavirus. The World Health Organization (WHO) officially named the disease COVID-19 or coronavirus disease. The virus that causes the disease is "severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2" (SARS-CoV-2).

https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance/naming-the-coronavirus-disease-(covid-2019)-and-the-virus-that-causes-it

Where can I get more information?

This situation is changing rapidly. Check your local health authority website or the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and WHO websites for updates and news:

CDC: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html

WHO: https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019

How does coronavirus disease spread?

The virus that causes coronavirus disease appears to spread easily. It is spreading from person-to-person. There has been community spread of the disease. This means that people in a community or area are infected and some people do not know how they are infected, because they do not feel sick.

 The virus appears to spread from one person to another through the air, on droplets which come from an infected person coughing or sneezing. Other viral illnesses are spread in the same way. These include:

- The common cold
- The flu (*influenza*)
- Other coronaviruses, such as SARS (*severe acute respiratory syndrome*) and MERS (*Middle East respiratory syndrome*)

https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html

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What are symptoms of coronavirus disease?

Symptoms vary from person-to-person. Some people have mild symptoms while others are very sick and need to be cared for in the hospital.

Symptoms may include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Tiredness, weakness, or fatigue
- Fast breathing or feeling short of breath

These symptoms can appear anywhere from 2-14 days after you are exposed to the virus. If you develop symptoms, contact your health care provider.

If you have any severe symptoms you should get help right away. These include:

- Trouble breathing

- Pain or pressure in your chest
- Confusion
- Blue-tinged lips and fingernails
- Difficulty waking from sleep

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/symptoms.html

https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus

If someone is exposed to the virus, how long does it take before symptoms start?

Symptoms of coronavirus disease may appear anywhere from 2 to 14 days after a person has been exposed to the virus. If you develop symptoms, contact your health care provider.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/symptoms.html

https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus

Is there a treatment or vaccine for this virus?

There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease and no medicines (such as antibiotics or antivirals) to treat the virus. A person who becomes ill is given supportive care, which means rest and fluids. A person may also relieve his or her symptoms by using over-the-counter medicines that treat sneezing, coughing, and runny nose. These are the same medicines that a person takes for the common cold. If you develop symptoms, contact your health care provider. People with severe symptoms should be cared for in the hospital.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fabout%2Fsteps-when-sick.html

https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public

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What can I do to protect myself and my family from this virus?

You can protect yourself and your family by taking the same actions you would take to prevent the spread of other viruses. You can take the following actions:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your arm when you sneeze or cough. Throw away used tissue at once and wash your hands
- Clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that people touch often

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick or have a fever or cough, if possible. Close contact means at least 3 ft (1 m)
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Stay home if you are sick
- Stay up to date on all vaccines. Ask your health care provider what vaccines you need

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/home/index.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fcommunity%2Fget-your-household-ready-for-COVID-19.html

https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses

Who is at risk for complications from coronavirus disease?

Some people may be at higher risk for complications from coronavirus disease. This includes older adults and people who have chronic diseases, such as heart disease, diabetes, and lung disease.

If you are at higher risk for complications, you should consider taking extra precautions. This includes: keeping supplies on hand at home, avoiding close contact with others (close contact means 3 ft (1 m)), staying away from others who are sick, washing your hands often, avoiding social gatherings, avoiding travel, and staying home as much as possible.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html
https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public

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What should I do if I am sick?

If you are sick, there are steps you can take to help prevent the spread of infection. These include:

- Staying home, unless you need medical care. Contact your health care provider or local health authority before you seek medical care
- Avoid public areas and public transportation, if possible
- Wear a mask when you are around others, if possible
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Try to separate yourself from other members of your household, if possible. If you can, sleep in a separate bedroom and use a separate bathroom. If you have children or

household pets, let others provide care. If you must provide care for children or pets, wash your hands often and wear a mask

- Clean and disinfect regularly. This is especially important for surfaces and objects that you touch often, including: doorknobs, phones, counters, tables, toilets, and remote controls. Follow recommendations for proper cleaning and disinfecting products: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/home/cleaning-disinfection.html, https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public

- Cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze. You can use a facial tissue or your arm. Throw away used facial tissues right away and wash your hands

- Avoid sharing personal items, including dishes, eating utensils, cups, towels, and bedding. Wash dishes, eating utensils, and cups in hot, soapy water. Wash laundry in hot water

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/steps-when-sick.html

https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public

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When should I contact my health care provider?

Contact your healthcare provider if you have symptoms of an infection, such as fever or cough and you:

- Have traveled outside of the country
- Were in contact with a person who is suspected to have or does have the novel coronavirus (COVID-19)
- Have been near anyone who is known to have the novel coronavirus

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/steps-when-sick.html

https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public

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When should I seek emergency medical care?

You should seek help right away by going to the emergency department or calling your local emergency services (911 in the U.S.) if you have:

- Trouble breathing
- Pain or pressure in your chest
- Confusion
- Blue-tinged lips and fingernails
- Difficulty waking from sleep

- Or, if your symptoms are getting worse

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/symptoms.html

https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public

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Should I be tested for this virus?

Your health care provider will decide whether to test for the virus that causes coronavirus disease based on your symptoms and if you were possibly exposed to the virus.

How does my health care provider test for this virus?

Your health care provider will collect samples to send for testing. Samples may include:
- Fluid from the nose or mouth (*sputum*). This will be collected from the upper and lower respiratory tract. To do this, a health care provider may use a swab to collect a sample from the nose and mouth. You may also be asked to cough sputum into a sterile cup.
- A blood sample
- A stool and urine sample

Can I get the virus from touching surfaces or objects?

There is still a lot that we do not know about the virus that causes coronavirus disease. Scientists are basing a lot of information on what they know about similar viruses. Generally, viruses cannot survive on surfaces for long. They need a human host to survive. If a person touches a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touches their face, eyes, nose, or mouth the virus may be able to enter the body. This most likely isn't the main way the virus is spreading. It is more likely the virus is being spread by close contact with people who are sick and breathing in respiratory droplets from coughing or sneezing.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html
https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus

Can a person spread the virus without having symptoms of the disease?

It may be possible for the virus to spread before a person has symptoms of the disease, but this most likely isn't the main way the virus is spreading. It is more likely the virus is being spread by close contact with people who are sick and breathing in respiratory droplets from coughing or sneezing.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html

https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus

What should I do if I need to travel?

Follow travel recommendations from your local health authority or the CDC and WHO provide recommendations for travel on their website, including restrictions on travel:

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html

https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/travel-advice

If you choose to travel, know the risks involved and take action to protect your health while traveling.

- You are at higher risk of getting the novel coronavirus if you are traveling to areas with the virus or if you are exposed to travelers from areas with the virus
- You can take action to stay safe and healthy. Always wash hands and practice good hygiene to minimize the risk of catching or spreading the virus

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Additional Resources

- World Health Organization: https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/
- Food and Drug Administration: https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/mcm-issues/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-frequently-asked-questions
- American Academy of Pediatrics: https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/chest-lungs/Pages/2019-Novel-Coronavirus.aspx
- World Health Organization global tracker: https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/685d0ace521648f8a5beeeee1b9125cd
- Johns Hopkins University Coronavirus COVID-19 Global Cases https://gisanddata.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6