Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

What is 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.

All 50 states in the U.S. have reported cases of COVID-19. Most states report "community spread" of COVID-19. This means the source of the illness is not known. COVID-19 is a rapidly-emerging infectious disease. This means that scientists are actively researching it.

There are information updates regularly. Visit the CDC website for the latest information. Or call 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636).

What causes coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

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.

Who is at risk for coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

You are at risk for infection if you've been to a place where people have been sick with this virus. You are at risk if you:

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

What are the symptoms of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

Some people have no symptoms or mild symptoms. Symptoms can also vary from person to person. As experts learn more about COVID-19, other symptoms are being reported. Symptoms may appear 2 to 14 days after contact with the virus. Symptoms can include:

- Fever
- Coughing
- Trouble breathing
- Sore throat
- Runny nose
- Headache or body aches
- Chills or repeated shaking with chills
- Tiredness (fatigue)
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or belly (abdominal) pain
- Loss of sense of smell and taste

You can check your symptoms with the CDC's Coronavirus Self-Checker.

How is coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) diagnosed?

Your healthcare provider will look at the risk for COVID in your community and 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 the
COVID-19 virus, he or she will work closely with your local health department to see if you should be tested. Follow all instructions from your healthcare provider. COVID-19 is diagnosed by:

- **Nose-throat swab.** A cotton-tipped swab is wiped inside your nose to the back of your throat. This is a viral test to tell you if you have a current COVID-19 infection.

If your healthcare provider thinks or confirms that you have COVID-19, you may have other tests. These tests may include:

- **Antibody blood test.** Antibody tests are being looked at to find out if a person has previously been infected with the virus and may now have antibodies in their blood to give some immunity. The accuracy and availability of antibody tests vary. An antibody test may not be able to show if you have a current infection because it can take up to a few weeks after infection to make antibodies. It's not yet known how long immunity lasts after being infected with the virus.
- **Sputum culture.** A small sample of mucus coughed from your lungs (sputum) may be collected if you have a moist cough. It may be checked for the virus or to look for pneumonia.
- **Imaging tests.** You may have a chest X-ray or CT scan.

### How is coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) treated?

There is currently no medicine proven to prevent or treat the virus. Some experimental medicines are being tested for COVID-19. Other medicines that are already available are being tested for use on the virus. Other medicines used to treat other conditions are being looked at for COVID-19, but they are not currently approved to treat it.

The most proven treatments right now are those to help your body while it fights the virus. This is known as supportive care. Supportive care may include:

- **Getting rest.** This helps your body fight the illness.
- **Staying hydrated.** Drinking liquids is the best way to prevent dehydration. Try to drink 6 to 8 glasses of liquids every day, or as advised by your provider. Also check with your provider about which fluids are best for you. Don't drink fluids that contain caffeine or alcohol.
- **Taking over-the-counter (OTC) pain medicine.** These are used to help ease pain and reduce fever. Follow your healthcare provider's instructions for which OTC medicine to use.

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.
- **Prone positioning.** Depending on how sick you are during your hospital stay, your healthcare team may turn you regularly on your stomach. This is called prone positioning. It's done to help increase the amount of oxygen you get to your lungs. Follow your healthcare team's instructions on position changes while you're in the hospital. Also follow their discharge advice on the best positions to help your breathing once you go home.

People who have had COVID-19 and are fully recovered may be asked by their healthcare team to consider donating plasma. This is called COVID-19 convalescent plasma donation. Plasma from people fully recovered from COVID-19 may contain antibodies to help fight COVID-19 in people who are currently seriously ill with the disease. It's not fully known if the donated plasma will work well as a treatment, but the FDA is looking at it and has asked the American Red Cross to help with plasma donation and collection. Talk with your provider to learn more about convalescent plasma donation and whether you qualify to donate.

### What are possible complications of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

In many cases, this virus can cause infection (pneumonia) in both lungs. In some cases, this can cause death, especially in older adults and people who have serious health conditions such as heart or lung disease or diabetes.
What can I do to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

There is no vaccine yet. The best prevention is to have no contact with the virus. The CDC advises that people should not travel to areas with COVID-19 outbreaks right now for any reason that is not urgent. For the most current CDC travel advisories, visit the [CDC website](https://www.cdc.gov). Don’t go on cruises or do non-essential travel right now.

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 and handles, cabinet handles, and light switches. Don’t shake hands.
- Clean home and work surfaces often with disinfectant. This includes desk surfaces, printers, phones, kitchen counters, tables, fridge door handle, bathroom surfaces, and any soiled surface. Closely follow disinfectant label instructions. See the CDC’s [cleaning website](https://www.cdc.gov) for detailed instructions.
- 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.
- The CDC advises wearing a cloth face mask in public. During a public health emergency, medical face masks may be reserved for healthcare workers. You may need to make a cloth face mask of your own. You can do this using a bandana, T-shirt, or other fabric. The CDC has [instructions on how to make a mask](https://www.cdc.gov). Wear the mask so that it covers both your nose and mouth.
- Stay away from people who are sick.
- 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 and 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.
- Experts don’t know if 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 have been exposed to someone with COVID-19

• Call your healthcare provider. He or she can talk with you about what to do next. Your activities and where you go may be restricted for up to 2 weeks.
• Follow all instructions from your provider.
• Take your temperature every morning and evening for at least 14 days. This is to check for fever. Keep a record of the readings.
• Contact your work supervisor if you are well but live in the same home with someone who has COVID-19.
• Keep watch for symptoms of the virus. Tell your provider right away if you have symptoms.
• 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 and pets. 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 the tissue into the trash. If you don’t have tissues, cough or sneeze into the bend of your elbow.
• 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 when you are in the same room with them. Wear the mask so that it covers both the nose and mouth.
• 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.

How to manage coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)

If you’ve 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.
• Limit contact with other people in your home.
• 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 when you are in the same room with them. Wear the mask so that it covers both the nose and mouth.
• 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 room, wear a face mask. Wear the mask so that it covers both the nose and mouth.
• 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 should I call my 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

Key points about coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)

• Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness.
• It’s caused by a new (novel) type of coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2. 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.
• If you live in or have traveled to a place where people have been sick with this virus, you are at risk for infection.
• The best way to prevent COVID-19 is not to be exposed to the virus. Wash your hands often, practice social distancing, stay away from large crowds, and stay informed about COVID-19 in your area. Don’t do any unnecessary travel.
• Symptoms include fever, coughing, and trouble breathing. Some people report digestive upset, loss of appetite, runny nose, headache and body aches, chills or repeated shaking with chills, and loss of taste and smell. In some cases, this virus can cause lung infection (pneumonia).
• There is currently no medicine approved to prevent or treat the virus. If you have COVID-19, treatment is done to help your body while it fights the virus. This is known as supportive care.
• If you are or were in an area with COVID-19 and have a fever or other symptoms, stay away from other people. Call your healthcare provider. Explain that you have been exposed to COVID-19 and have symptoms. Do this before going to any hospital or clinic so as not to spread an illness to others. Wait for instructions.
• If your healthcare provider thinks you may have COVID-19, he or she will work closely with your local health department. Follow all instructions from your healthcare provider.

Next steps

Tips to help you get the most from a visit to your healthcare provider:

• Know the reason for your visit and what you want to happen.
• Before your visit, write down questions you want answered.
• Bring someone with you to help you ask questions and remember what your provider tells you.
• At the visit, write down the name of a new diagnosis, and any new medicines, treatments, or tests. Also write down any new instructions your provider gives you.
• Know why a new medicine or treatment is prescribed, and how it will help you. Also know what the side effects are.
• Ask if your condition can be treated in other ways.
• Know why a test or procedure is recommended and what the results could mean.
• Know what to expect if you do not take the medicine or have the test or procedure.
• If you have a follow-up appointment, write down the date, time, and purpose for that visit.
• Know how you can contact your provider if you have questions.

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