

ARE YOU READY?

COVID-19: What are the basics?

In December 2019, health officials found that people in Wuhan, China, were getting sick from an unknown respiratory illness. Scientists determined it was caused by a new — or “novel” — coronavirus that had not been seen before. The disease, which was named COVID-19, spread to other countries. In March 2020, the World Health Organization declared the outbreak a global pandemic.



What are the symptoms? How does it spread?

The symptoms of infection with COVID-19 can appear 2-14 days after the exposure to the virus. They can include:

- fever
- cough
- chills
- difficulty breathing
- fatigue
- muscle aches
- new loss of taste or smell
- runny nose
- vomiting
- sore throat
- diarrhea
- other flu-like symptoms

COVID-19 can spread from person-to-person. People who do not show any symptoms but are infected can still spread COVID-19 to others. Coronaviruses can be spread through the air by coughing, sneezing and through close personal contact, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. COVID-19 can be fatal.

For some people, COVID-19 symptoms don't end after their infection does. About 13% of people experience long COVID, with headaches, pain, tiredness and other issues. The problems can last for months or years, making it hard to work or live everyday life.

How is COVID-19 detected and treated?

If you have been exposed to COVID-19, you can test yourself at home or be tested by a health professional. Many communities have free testing sites for everyone, even if you don't have health insurance.



If you test positive, monitor your symptoms, communicate with your health care team and follow CDC guidelines for isolation at home to protect others. It is possible to get reinfected with COVID-19.

People with mild symptoms should rest, drink plenty of fluids and take pain or fever medication. Seek hospital treatment if you have trouble breathing, constant chest pain or new confusion. Call your doctor if you have other severe symptoms.

People with COVID-19 who are in the hospital may receive antiviral drugs or monoclonal antibody treatments, which are made in a lab to fight specific infections.



How can I protect myself from COVID-19?

The best way to prevent infection from COVID-19 is to get a free COVID-19 vaccine and booster. People who are vaccinated against COVID-19 are much less likely to get severely ill, be hospitalized or die from the disease.

Avoid being exposed to COVID-19. Wear a high-quality mask, stay at least six feet away from others and avoid crowded places and people who have been infected.

You can also take everyday actions that help prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses:

- Use an N95, KN95 or surgical mask to cover your nose and mouth when you are around others.
- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Do not come in close contact with people who are sick. Stay home when you are sick.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you sneeze or cough. Throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands afterward.

Why do recommendations change?

As the virus continues to spread, it can change, making it more difficult to stop. Because of the ongoing changes, guidelines from health officials are updated to keep you safe.

Where can I get more information?

CDC and WHO offer credible, science-based information on COVID-19. Visit www.cdc.gov and www.who.int.



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