

What is a Coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that cause respiratory illness affecting your breathing. These conditions can range from the common cold to more severe illness (like the flu). This new strain of coronavirus, known as COVID-19, is a harmful version of the virus. Symptoms can include sneezing, dry coughing, temperature of 100.4° F or greater, and shortness of breath. Similar to the common cold and respiratory illness caused by the influenza virus (the flu), COVID-19 spreads person-to-person. This is why good hygiene, such as proper hand washing, use of hand sanitizer, and avoiding obviously sick people is particularly important to prevent the spread of this disease during this time.

What are the signs and symptoms? How will I know if I am at risk of having this virus?

The signs and symptoms of the coronavirus (COVID-19) are detailed in the list below. The period of time between exposure to the coronavirus and showing symptoms is somewhere between 2 days and 14 days, in most cases. Symptoms are:

- Fever (Temperature 100.4° F or greater)
- Dry cough
- Shortness of breath
- Fatigue or excessive tiredness
- Headache

How does it spread?

This virus spreads from person-to-person through the air, by way of droplets created by coughing, sneezing, or speaking. It can also spread by way of contact with an infected person, or touching everyday surfaces, such as door handles, elevator buttons, and cellphones.

Anyone who comes in contact with someone who has COVID-19 is at risk. However, people 65 and older are at increased risk of developing worse forms of the disease, especially if they have underlying medical conditions. These may include chronic lung disease, asthma, diabetes (sugar), cancer, or people that have received an organ transplant. Smokers are also at slightly increased risk.

If you have recently traveled from an area with widespread or ongoing community spread of COVID-19, you should notify your physician immediately.

Why is this Coronavirus (COVID-19) so important?

It is important because it spreads quickly and there is no cure or vaccine, at this time.

How do I protect myself?

Be aware of risks and hygiene when traveling on commercial vehicles, such as planes, trains, and buses. You can protect yourself by using the same simple techniques used to prevent any type of viral sickness similar to the common cold and flu, such as:

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- If you do not have access to soap and water, use hand sanitizer (**with at least 60% alcohol**)
- Avoid close contact (within six feet) of other people
- Avoid touching your face, especially eyes, nose, and mouth
- Stay home when you are sick
- Cover your cough and sneeze into your elbow
- Clean and disinfect household and office objects that are touched often (table tops, desktops, computers, and cellphones, etc.)
- Remember to use disinfectant wipes to clean common surfaces, such as armrests, door handles, and tray tables when traveling on trains, planes, taxis, and buses
- If you use a tissue to cover your cough or sneeze, throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands afterwards to be safe
- Continue to practice healthy habits such as adequate sleep, exercise, and proper dieting

Do I need to wear a mask?

No, unless you are sick, or traveling with or caring for a sick person. However, if your immune system is weak, speak with your doctor about what you should do to protect yourself.

It is important for people with the COVID-19 to wear an **N95** mask at all times when exposed to others, to prevent spreading the virus. The CDC recommends wearing an N95 facemask **ONLY** for people who have symptoms or are providing care for sick people in homes or healthcare facilities. It is important to note that the mask should cover both the nose and mouth to be effective.

What do I do if I have symptoms?

- Call your healthcare provider or local health department immediately.
- Avoid going to emergency rooms or urgent care centers, unless your doctor or the health department representative directs you to go. This further minimizes the spread of contagious diseases.

This correspondence was developed in alignment with the guidelines and recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization.

For additional information and updates, please visit the CDC Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) Disease website:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019ncov/cases-in-us.html>.