
FACT SHEET

CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19)

WHAT IS THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19) AND HOW IS IT SPREAD?

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a novel (new) coronavirus that previously has not been seen in humans. The virus was first detected in Wuhan City, China, in December 2019. The abbreviation COVID-19 has three parts – ‘COVI’ stands for coronavirus, ‘D’ stands for disease, and ‘19’ represents the year in which the outbreak started. COVID-19 is not the same type of coronavirus that causes mild illness or the common cold.

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person, especially among people who are in close contact with one another, which means within about 6 feet. The virus is spread through respiratory droplets that are released when an infected person coughs or sneezes. If the droplets land on another person’s mouth or nose, they can be inhaled into that person’s lungs. It is also possible to get COVID-19 by touching objects or surfaces that have the virus on them and then touching one’s nose, mouth, or eyes.

REFERENCE: CDC. (4, March 2020). How it Spreads. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html>.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms include fever, coughing, and shortness of breath, which may appear 2-14 days after exposed to COVID-19. In reported cases, symptoms have ranged from mild to severe illness and death. Other symptoms may include chills, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of sense of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea.

The CDC notes that “atypical presentation of COVID-19 occurs often and older adults and people with comorbidities may experience fever and respiratory symptoms later during the course of illness.” The CDC further states that “Some people with mild symptoms initially may worsen in the second week of illness.” This means that caregivers should closely observe people who are older and/or those with pre-existing conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease or cancer for symptoms later in the course of the COVID-19 infection. Inform the physician immediately of late symptoms so an appropriate management plan can be determined.

REFERENCES: CDC. (22, December 2020). Symptoms of Coronavirus. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html> and CC. (8, December 2020). Interim Clinical Guidance for Management of Patients with Confirmed Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19). Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/clinical-guidance-management-patients.html>

WHEN SHOULD I SEEK EMERGENCY CARE FOR COVID-19?

Anyone showing these emergency warning signs should seek emergency care immediately: trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in chest, new confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, bluish lips or face.

REFERENCE: CDC. (17, December 2020) Symptoms and Emergency Warning Signs. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#Symptoms-&-Emergency-Warning-Signs>

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I MIGHT HAVE COVID-19?

Call your doctor if you develop a fever, cough, and shortness of breath; have been in close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19; or have recently been to an area with ongoing spread of the virus. Your doctor will determine if you need to be tested for the virus.

People who have COVID-19 and are mildly ill should isolate themselves at home during their illness. Activity outside the home should be limited, except when medical care is needed. Avoid using public transportation. As much as possible, stay away from other people in the home, and use a separate bathroom, if available. Restrict contact with pets while sick with COVID-19, until more information is known about the spreading of the virus.

Seek emergency medical attention if symptoms worsen. Worsening symptoms may include: difficulty breathing, ongoing pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion, inability to arouse/awaken, and bluish lips or face. If you have a medical emergency, call 911 and notify the dispatcher that you have COVID-19. If possible, place a facemask over your mouth and nose before emergency professionals arrive.

REFERENCE: CDC. (1, March 2020). What to Do if You are Sick. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/steps-when-sick.html>.

PREVENTION

There is no vaccine currently available to prevent COVID-19. The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to the virus.

The CDC recommends the following preventative actions:

- Avoiding close contact with individuals who are sick.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth.
- Staying home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces with disinfecting spray or wipe.
- Wear a facemask if you are showing symptoms of COVID-19.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds.
- If soap and water are unavailable, use an alcohol based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

TREATMENT

There is no specific antiviral treatment for COVID-19. Individuals with COVID-19 should receive supportive care for symptom relief. In severe cases, treatment may include supporting vital organ functions. Anyone who has been exposed to COVID-19 should contact their doctor immediately.

REFERENCE: CDC. (2020, February 15). Prevention and Treatment. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention-treatment.html>

WHO IS AT HIGHER RISK?

The CDC states that “older adults and people with severe chronic medical conditions like heart, lung, or kidney disease seem to be at a higher risk for more serious COVID-19 illness.” The CDC recommends the following steps for people at higher risk:

- Stay home as much as possible.
- Make sure you have access to several weeks of medication and supplies, in case you are home for a long period of time.
- When you are in public, stay away from others who are sick.
- Wash your hand often.
- Avoid crowds.
- Stay up to date on COVID-19 information and travel alerts.

PREPARING FOR COVID-19

In preparation for COVID-19, the CDC recommends:

- Have supplies on hand, including extra medications.
- Have over-the-counter medicines and supplies on hand to treat fever and other symptoms.
- Have household items and groceries on hand so you are prepared to stay home for a long period of time.
- Avoid those who are sick.
- Make a plan for what to do if you get sick.
- Wash your hands often.
- Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces.

REFERENCE: CDC. (5, March 2020). People at Higher Risk. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>.