

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Info & Home Care Instructions

Diagnosis

Coronaviruses are a common cause of the common cold. COVID-19 is a novel (newly discovered) Coronavirus that is currently causing illness across the world. Most of those infected will have a limited and mild case. It will feel more like a cold. Most people who become infected with COVID-19 will be able to care for themselves at home. Antibiotics such as penicillin do not kill viruses. Vaccination is highly recommended, especially for high-risk groups like diabetics and immunocompromised.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) believes at this time that symptoms of COVID-19 may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure. Typical COVID-19 symptoms include fever, muscle aches, cough and shortness of breath that can last for two weeks or even longer. Half of patients with have GI symptoms like nausea and diarrhea. Loss of smell and taste has also been reported.

People who get sick tend to first suffer minor ailments, like headaches, light coughs, and a slight fever for around a week. But it's usually only at the end of the second week that they will either start improving, or suddenly decline, and for those who do get worse, it can quickly escalate to a trip to the emergency room. About twenty per cent of those infected with COVID-19 can have more serious symptoms such as high fever or breathing problems which need oxygen and hospital treatment.

Preventing Spread

COVID-19 is mostly spread through person-to-person close contact (within about 6 feet). Small droplets from coughing and sneezing can enter the mouth and lungs of those nearby. It is also possible that infection can happen by touching a surface or object that has virus on it such as a table or door knob and then touching their own eyes, mouth or nose, but this is not the main cause of spread.

People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest) and especially with coughing. Some spread might be possible before people show symptoms; there have been reports of this, but this is not thought to be the main cause of spread.

COVID-19 appears to spread easily

- **Stay home when you are sick**
- Avoid people who are sick (6 feet rule)
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a household cleaning spray or wipe
- Facemasks are recommended for all people when in public
- Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others

- Use a facemask if you are taking care of someone in close settings (at home or in a health care facility)
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- Wash especially after using the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol
- Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty

Treatments

- In general, follow these three basic rules:
 - (1) Keep warm and rest as much as possible. If you feel like resting, you should.
 - (2) Take plenty of fluids. Room temperature fluids are often better tolerated. Food is not as important since appetite will return when you are well.
 - (3) For fever, take Tylenol or Motrin in normal doses (see label on the bottle).
- **If cough is present:** Humidification and drinking lots of fluids helps to moisten and loosen up sticky mucus. Non-prescription drugs designed to help with cough, such as Mucinex or Robitussin, are occasionally helpful. If you use an inhaler, you might need to use it more regularly as prescribed, and with a chamber if you have one.
- **If throat is sore:** Gargle with warm salt water (1/2 tsp salt in 1/2 glass of water). Try cold packs to the outside of your throat to help ease the pain of swallowing. Humidification of the air you breathe (use vaporizer, pans of evaporating water, or steaming tub or shower) and lots of fluids help.
- **If temperature is elevated:** Fluids are doubly important. Fever medicine (such as Tylenol or Motrin) should control temperature. Persistent temperature elevation of 103-104 degrees is a danger sign.
- **If nausea and/or diarrhea are present:** Eat only clear liquids, soups, or juices as tolerated. Remember fluids are important to prevent dehydration. You can use *mild* non-prescription medications for diarrhea like Pepto-Bismol.

If your symptoms worsen call your doctor's office for further instructions, especially if you notice:

- Persistent temperature elevation greater than 103-104 degrees despite fever medication
- Bloody or dark sputum
- Chest pain
- Increasing difficulty getting your breath, especially with exertion
- Stiff neck preventing bending neck and placing chin on chest

More information is available at this link: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html>