

CORONAVIRUS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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1. What is a coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which may cause illness in animals or humans. In humans, several coronaviruses are known to cause respiratory infections ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The most recently discovered coronavirus causes coronavirus disease COVID-19.

2. What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus(SARS-CoV-2). This new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019.

3. What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, tiredness, and dry cough. Some patients may have aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat or diarrhea. These symptoms are usually mild and begin gradually. Some people become infected but don't develop any symptoms and don't feel unwell. Most people (about 80%) recover from the disease without needing special treatment.

Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like high blood pressure, heart problems or diabetes, are more likely to develop serious illness. People with fever, cough and difficulty breathing should seek medical attention.

4. How does COVID-19 spread?

The disease can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth which are spread when a person with COVID-19 coughs or exhales. These droplets land on objects and surfaces around the person. Other people then catch COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. People can also catch COVID-19 if they breathe in droplets from a person with COVID-19 who coughs out or exhales droplets. This is why it is important to stay more than 1 meter (3 feet) away from a person who is sick.

5. Can the virus that causes COVID-19 be transmitted through the air?

Studies to date suggest that the virus that causes COVID-19 is mainly transmitted through contact with respiratory droplets rather than through the air.

6. Can COVID-19 be caught from a person who has no symptoms?

The main way the disease spreads is through respiratory droplets expelled by someone who is coughing. The risk of catching COVID-19 from someone with no symptoms at all is very low. However, many people with COVID-19 experience only mild symptoms. This is particularly true at the early stages of the disease. It is therefore possible to catch COVID-19 from someone who has, for example, just a mild cough and does not feel ill.

7. What can I do to protect myself and prevent the spread of disease?

Protection measures for everyone

You can reduce your chances of being infected or spreading COVID-19 by taking some simple precautions:

- Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water.
Why? Washing your hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand rub kills viruses that may be on your hands.
- Maintain at least 1 metre (3 feet) distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.
Why? When someone coughs or sneezes they spray small liquid droplets from their nose or mouth which may contain virus. If you are too close, you can breathe in the droplets, including the COVID-19 virus if the person coughing has the disease.

- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth.

Why? Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth. From there, the virus can enter your body and can make you sick.

- Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately.

Why? Droplets spread virus. By following good respiratory hygiene you protect the people around you from viruses such as cold, flu and COVID-19.

- Stay home if you feel unwell. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and call in advance. Follow the directions of your local health authority.

Why? National and local authorities will have the most up to date information on the situation in your area. Calling in advance will allow your health care provider to quickly direct you to the right health facility. This will also protect you and help prevent spread of viruses and other infections.

- Keep up to date on the latest COVID-19 hotspots (cities or local areas where COVID-19 is spreading widely). If possible, avoid traveling to places – especially if you are an older person or have diabetes, heart or lung disease.

Why? You have a higher chance of catching COVID-19 in one of these areas.

Protection measures for persons who are in or have recently visited (past 14 days) areas where COVID-19 is spreading

- o Self-isolate by staying at home if you begin to feel unwell, even with mild symptoms such as headache, low grade fever (37.3 C or above) and slight runny nose, until you recover. If it is essential for you to have someone bring you supplies or to go out, e.g. to buy food, then wear a mask to avoid infecting other people.

Why? Avoiding contact with others and visits to medical facilities will allow these facilities to operate more effectively and help protect you and others from possible COVID-19 and other viruses.

- o If you develop fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical advice promptly as this may be due to a respiratory infection or other serious condition. Call in advance and tell your provider of any recent travel or contact with travelers.

Why? Calling in advance will allow your health care provider to quickly direct you to the right health facility. This will also help to prevent possible spread of COVID-19 and other viruses.

8. How likely am I to catch COVID-19?

The risk depends on where you are- and more specifically, whether there is a COVID-19 outbreak unfolding there. For most people in most locations the risk of catching COVID-19 is still low. However, there are now places around the world (cities or areas) where the disease is spreading. For people living in, or visiting, these areas the risk of catching COVID-19 is higher. Governments and health authorities are taking vigorous action every time a new case of COVID-19 is identified. Be sure to comply with any local restrictions on travel, movement or large gatherings. Cooperating with disease control efforts will reduce your risk of catching or spreading COVID-19.

9. Should I worry about COVID-19?

Illness due to COVID-19 infection is generally mild, especially for children and young adults. However, it can cause serious illness: about 1 in every 5 people who catch it need hospital care. It is therefore quite normal for people to worry about how the COVID-19 outbreak will affect them and their loved ones.

First and foremost, among these actions is regular and thorough hand-washing and good respiratory hygiene.

Secondly, keep informed and follow the advice of the local health authorities including any restrictions put in place on travel, movement and gatherings.

10. Who is at risk of developing severe illness?

While we are still learning about how COVID-2019 affects people, older persons and persons with pre-existing medical conditions (such as high blood pressure, heart disease, lung disease, cancer or diabetes) appear to develop serious illness more often than others.

11. Should I wear a mask to protect myself?

Only wear a mask if you are ill with COVID-19 symptoms (especially coughing) or looking after someone who may have COVID-19. Disposable face mask can only be used once. If you are not ill or looking after someone who is ill then you are wasting a mask. There is a world-wide shortage of masks, so WHO urges people to use masks wisely.

The most effective ways to protect yourself and others against COVID-19 are to frequently clean your hands, cover your cough with the bend of elbow or tissue and maintain a distance of at least 1 meter (3 feet) from people who are coughing or sneezing.

12. How to put on, use, take off and dispose of a mask?

1. Remember, a mask should only be used by health workers, care takers, and individuals with respiratory symptoms, such as fever and cough.
2. Before touching the mask, clean hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water
3. Take the mask and inspect it for tears or holes.
4. Orient which side is the top side (where the metal strip is).
5. Ensure the proper side of the mask faces outwards (the coloured side).
6. Place the mask to your face. Pinch the metal strip or stiff edge of the mask so it moulds to the shape of your nose.
7. Pull down the mask's bottom so it covers your mouth and your chin.
8. After use, take off the mask; remove the elastic loops from behind the ears while keeping the mask away from your face and clothes, to avoid touching potentially contaminated surfaces of the mask.
9. Discard the mask in a closed bin immediately after use.
10. Perform hand hygiene after touching or discarding the mask – Use alcohol-based hand rub or, if visibly soiled, wash your hands with soap and water.

13. How long is the incubation period for COVID-19?

The “incubation period” means the time between catching the virus and beginning to have symptoms of the disease. Most estimates of the incubation period for COVID-19 range from 1-14 days, most commonly around five days. These estimates will be updated as more data become available.

14. Can humans become infected with the COVID-19 from an animal source?

Possible animal sources of COVID-19 have not yet been confirmed.

To protect yourself, such as when visiting live animal markets, avoid direct contact with animals and surfaces in contact with animals. Ensure good food safety practices at all times. Handle raw meat, milk or animal organs with care to avoid contamination of uncooked foods and avoid consuming raw or undercooked animal products.

15. Can I catch COVID-19 from my pet?

While there has been one instance of a dog being infected in Hong Kong, to date, there is no evidence that a dog, cat or any pet can transmit COVID-19. COVID-19 is mainly spread through droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or speaks. To protect yourself, clean your hands frequently and thoroughly.

16. How long does the virus survive on surfaces?

It is not certain how long the virus that causes COVID-19 survives on surfaces, but it seems to behave like other coronaviruses. Studies suggest that coronaviruses (including preliminary information on the COVID-19 virus) may persist on surfaces for a few hours or up to several days. This may vary under different conditions (e.g. type of surface, temperature or humidity of the environment).

If you think a surface may be infected, clean it with simple disinfectant to kill the virus and protect yourself and others. Clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water. Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, or nose.

17. Is it safe to receive a package from any area where COVID-19 has been reported?

Yes. The likelihood of an infected person contaminating commercial goods is low and the risk of catching the virus that causes COVID-19 from a package that has been moved, travelled, and exposed to different conditions and temperature is also low.

In any case, if you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing seek medical care early to reduce the risk of developing a more severe infection and be sure to share your recent travel history with your health care provider. Self-isolate yourself for 14 days.

18. Can someone who has been quarantined, spread the disease?

Quarantine means separating a person or group of people who have been exposed to a contagious disease but have not developed illness (symptoms) from others who have not been exposed, in order to prevent the possible spread of that disease. For COVID-19, the period of quarantine is 14 days from the last date of exposure, because 14 days is the longest incubation period seen for similar coronaviruses. Someone who has been released from COVID-19 quarantine is not considered a risk for spreading the virus to others because they have not developed illness during the incubation period.

19. Who should be tested for COVID-19?

If you develop symptoms such as fever, cough, and/or difficulty breathing, and have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19 or have recently traveled from an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19, stay home and call your healthcare provider.

Older patients and individuals who have severe underlying medical conditions or are immunocompromised should contact their healthcare provider early, even if their illness is mild.

If you have severe symptoms, such as persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion or inability to arouse, or bluish lips of face, contact your healthcare provider or emergency room and seek care immediately.

Your doctor will determine if you have signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and whether you should be tested.

20. My son is returning from a high-risk country(Iran/China). Will he be quarantined?

Depending on his travel history, you will be asked to stay isolated for a period of 14 days from the time left an area with widespread or ongoing community spread.

21. Can I go to mall/restaurant etc?

As long as active transmission is going on, it is always safe to avoid crowded places, huge gatherings etc.

22. Will warm weather stop the outbreak of COVID-19?

It is not yet known whether weather and temperature impact the spread of COVID-19. Some other viruses, like the common cold and flu, spread more during cold weather months but that does not mean it is impossible to become sick with these viruses during other months. At this time, it is not known whether the spread of COVID-19 will decrease when weather becomes warmer. There is much more to learn about the transmissibility, severity, and other features associated with COVID-19 and investigations are ongoing.

23. What is community spread?

Community spread means people have been infected with the virus in an area, including some who are not sure how or where they became infected.

24. What should people at higher risk of serious illness with COVID-19 do?

If you are at higher risk of getting very sick from COVID-19, you should: stock up on supplies; take everyday precautions to keep space between yourself and others; when you go out in public, keep away from others who are sick; limit close contact and wash your hands often; and avoid crowds, cruise travel, and non-essential travel. If there is an outbreak in your community, stay home as much as possible. Watch for symptoms and emergency signs. Watch for symptoms and emergency signs. If you get sick, stay home and call your doctor.

25. Why might someone blame or avoid individuals and groups because of COVID-19?

Some people are worried about the disease. Fear and anxiety can lead to social stigma, for example, towards Chinese or other Asian Americans or people who were in quarantine.

Stigma is discrimination against an identifiable group of people, a place, or a nation. Stigma is associated with a lack of knowledge about how COVID-19 spreads, a need to blame someone, fears about disease and death, and gossip that spreads rumors and myths.

Stigma hurts everyone by creating more fear or anger towards ordinary people instead of the disease that is causing the problem.

26. How can people help stop stigma related to COVID-19?

People can fight stigma and help, not hurt, others by providing social support. Counter stigma by learning and sharing facts. Communicating the facts that viruses do not target specific racial or ethnic groups and how COVID-19 actually spreads can help stop stigma.

27. Can I catch COVID-19 from the feces of someone with the disease?

The risk of catching COVID-19 from the feces of an infected person appears to be low. While initial investigations suggest the virus may be present in feces in some cases, spread through this route is not a main feature of the outbreak. WHO is assessing ongoing research on the ways COVID-19 is spread and will continue to share new findings. Because this is a risk, however, it is another reason to clean hands regularly, after using the bathroom and before eating.

28. Are antibiotics effective in preventing or treating the COVID-19?

No. Antibiotics do not work against viruses, they only work on bacterial infections. COVID-19 is caused by a virus, so antibiotics do not work. Antibiotics should not be used as a means of prevention or treatment of COVID-19. They should only be used as directed by a physician to treat a bacterial infection.

29. Are there any medicines or therapies that can prevent or cure COVID-19?

While some western, traditional or home remedies may provide comfort and alleviate symptoms of COVID-19, there is no evidence that current medicine can prevent or cure the disease. WHO does not recommend self-medication with any medicines, including antibiotics, as a prevention or cure for COVID-19. However, there are several ongoing clinical trials that include both western and traditional medicines. WHO will continue to provide updated information as soon as clinical findings are available.

30. Is there a vaccine, drug or treatment for COVID-19?

Not yet. To date, there is no vaccine and no specific antiviral medicine to prevent or treat COVID-2019. However, those affected should receive care to relieve symptoms. People with serious illness should be hospitalized. Most patients recover thanks to supportive care.

Possible vaccines and some specific drug treatments are under investigation. They are being tested through clinical trials. WHO is coordinating efforts to develop vaccines and medicines to prevent and treat COVID-19.

The most effective ways to protect yourself and others against COVID-19 are to frequently clean your hands, cover your cough with the bend of elbow or tissue, and maintain a distance of at least 1 meter (3 feet) from people who are coughing or sneezing

31. Is COVID-19 the same as SARS?

No. The virus that causes COVID-19 and the one that caused the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003 are related to each other genetically, but the diseases they cause are quite different.

SARS was more deadly but much less infectious than COVID-19. There have been no outbreaks of SARS anywhere in the world since 2003