



2019 NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

October 27, 2021

COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions:

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by a newly identified coronavirus known as SARS-CoV-2. The virus was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, China and quickly spread world-wide. In March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a pandemic. Research is taking place worldwide to better understand the SARS-CoV-2 virus, COVID-19, what measures help to limit the spread of disease and treatment options.

How does COVID-19 Spread?

The COVID-19 virus (SARS-CoV-2) is most commonly spread when a person infected with the virus coughs, sneezes, talks, or sings, creating respiratory droplets that can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. The virus can live on surfaces or objects. As such, the virus can be transmitted when a person touches the contaminated objects and then touches their mouth, nose or eyes.

How long does it take to get COVID-19?

The incubation period, the time it takes for you to develop symptoms after you were exposed, is thought to be between 2 to 14 days after exposure. However, for most people the average time from exposure to development of symptoms is between 5-6 days.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

The main symptoms seen with COVID-19 are fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, extreme fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and/or diarrhea. Not everyone has all these symptoms, and people experience a wide range of symptoms with COVID-19. The vast majority of people remain asymptomatic or have mild to moderate symptoms and fully recover. According to the WHO, 10-15% of people develop severe symptoms that require hospitalization, 5% become critically ill and a small percentage of people with COVID-19 die. People with obesity (BMI>30), chronic medical conditions, smokers and older adults are at higher risk for severe illness and death.

How is COVID-19 diagnosed?

SARS-CoV-2 can be suspected in anyone who has symptoms consistent with COVID-19, but a definite diagnosis requires testing. There are two kinds of tests available for COVID-19, one which tests for a current infection (PCR viral tests and antigen tests) and one which tests for a past infection (antibody tests).

PCR viral tests test for a current infection by testing for the presence of the actual COVID-19 virus. In such



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a test, a sample is taken from the person suspected to be infected, such as a nasal or a very deep nasal swab (i.e. nasopharyngeal), and this is analyzed by a lab to determine if the virus is present. Such tests can take a day to several days to result.

Antigens are structural components of the virus. Antigen tests test for the presence of these structural components, like the spikes on the outside of COVID-19 virus. Antigen tests are typically quicker and less expensive, but they are also less accurate than lab-based PCR tests.

An antibody test might be helpful to tell if the person tested had a past infection with COVID-19 but does not accurately show if this person has a current infection as it can take 1-3 weeks after an infection for a person's body to develop antibodies. Having antibodies to COVID-19 may protect you against another infection with COVID-19 (immunity) but it is still unknown how much protection these antibodies may provide or how long this protection may last. Antibody tests should not be used to diagnose a current COVID-19 infection, and a viral PCR test or antigen test is needed to determine if a current infection is present.

Is COVID-19 serious?

COVID-19 can cause serious symptoms and even death in certain people. According to the WHO, 10-15% of people develop severe symptoms that require hospitalization, 5% become critically ill and a small percentage of people with COVID-19 die. People who are overweight or obese (BMI>25), chronic medical conditions, smokers and older adults are at higher risk for severe illness and death. Of note, this same population has an increased risk of serious illness from any respiratory or fever illness such as the flu (influenza).

At this time, the COVID-19 death rate varies by region and age group from <1% in children to 20% in older adults with pre-existing conditions. In the US the average case fatality rate (the rate of death in people diagnosed with COVID-19) among all age groups is 1.7%. The overall mortality rate (the rate of death from COVID-19 in the population as a whole) in the US among all age groups is 0.04%. Worldwide the case fatality rate among all age groups is 2.1%. Please note that all of these percentages are based on incomplete data as not all people are being tested for COVID-19.

In comparison, COVID-19 is far less lethal than some other outbreaks like SARS (10% case fatality rate), MERS (34% case fatality rate) Bird Flu (60% case fatality rate) and Ebola (70% case fatality rate).

What if someone in my family gets sick with COVID-19?

If your family member does not need hospitalization and can be cared for at home, you should help him or her with basic needs and monitor the symptoms while also keeping as much distance as possible. According to guidelines issued by the CDC, the sick family member should stay in a separate room and use a separate bathroom, if space allows. If masks are available, both the sick person and the caregiver should wear them when the caregiver enters the room. (Please refer to the CDC website for the most current mask recommendations.) Make sure not to share any dishes or other household items and to regularly clean surfaces like counters, doorknobs, toilets and tables. Remember to wash your hands frequently.



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Additionally, the CDC recommends that if you live in the same household with a person who is known to have COVID-19 that you home isolate for 14 days after your last contact with that person or for 14 days after the person who is sick meets the criteria to end their own home isolation.

What is considered a concerning exposure in terms of COVID-19?

The CDC defines a concerning exposure to COVID-19 as “close contact” with someone with known or suspected COVID-19 during the contagious period.

The CDC defines “close contact” as:

- You were within 6 feet of someone sick with COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more in a 24-hour period
- You provided care at home to someone who is sick with COVID-19
- You had direct physical contact with a person (hugged or kissed them) who is sick with COVID-19
- You shared eating or drinking utensils with a person who is sick with COVID-19
- You were sneezed on, coughed on, or somehow got the respiratory droplets of a person sick with COVID-19 on you

Known or Suspected COVID-19 is defined as:

- Anyone with a positive COVID-19 test
- Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19

The contagious period:

- Begins 2 days prior to the onset of symptoms and ends 10 days after the onset of symptoms
- Begins 2 days prior to the day a person had a positive COVID-19 test taken and ends 10 days after the day the positive COVID-19 test was taken

Additionally, the CDC recommends that if you live in the same household with a person who is known to have COVID-19 that you home isolate for 14 days after your last contact with the person known to have COVID-19 or for 14 days after the person who is sick meets the criteria to end their own home isolation (in situations where you are unable to completely isolate from the person during the time they are sick).

If I was exposed to a person with COVID-19, how long should I quarantine?

If you were exposed to a person with COVID-19, it might take up to 14 days after the exposure for symptoms to develop. As such, the CDC continues to recommend quarantine for 14 days. The most contagious period is the first 7-10 days of symptoms; therefore, the CDC provides two additional options for a shorter quarantine but recognizes that any quarantine shorter than 14 days balances reduced burden against a small possibility of spreading the virus. The CDC recommends you follow your local public health department recommendations for the following alternative options to a 14-day quarantine:

- Quarantine can end after Day 10 without testing and if you have no symptoms during daily monitoring.



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- When COVID-19 testing resources are available, quarantine can end after Day 7 if you have a negative viral test and if no symptoms were reported during daily monitoring. The viral test may be collected and tested within 48 hours before the time of planned quarantine discontinuation, but quarantine cannot be discontinued earlier than after Day 7.

If a shorter than 14-day quarantine is followed, the CDC recommends that you continue monitoring yourself for possible symptoms for a full 14 days after exposure. If symptoms begin, you should immediately self-isolate and follow isolation guidelines for symptoms of COVID-19.

If you had COVID-19 confirmed with a positive COVID-19 test in the past 3 months' time and have fully recovered you do not need to quarantine after an exposure as long as you do not have or develop any symptoms of COVID-19.

If you have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and show no symptoms of COVID-19, you do not need to quarantine but should:

- Get tested 5-7 days after your last exposure.
- Wear a mask indoors in public for 14 days following exposure or until your test result is negative.

Employers typically have policies regarding when they permit an employee to return to work after quarantine. So, please refer to your employer's COVID-19 quarantine policy.

Do I need to home isolate after travel?

If you are fully vaccinated, you do not have to quarantine after domestic or international travel unless you have symptoms of COVID-19. The CDC recommends that you:

- Get tested 3-5 days after your last exposure.
- Wear a mask indoors in public for 14 days following exposure or until your test result is negative.

If you have either recovered from a COVID-19 infection or had a positive COVID-19 test within the last 3 months, the CDC does not recommend quarantine or testing unless you have symptoms of COVID-19.

If you are not fully vaccinated, have not recovered from a COVID-19 infection in the last 3 months, or have not had a positive COVID-19 test in the last 3 months, the CDC recommends you do the following:

Before Travel (either domestically or internationally):

- Consider getting tested with a viral test 1-3 days before you travel.
- If your COVID-19 test is positive before or after your travel do not travel and immediately home isolate.

After Travel (either domestically or internationally):

- Get tested 3-5 days after travel AND stay home for 7 days after travel.
 - Even if you test negative, stay home for the full 7 days.



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- If your test is positive, isolate yourself for 10 days after the test was collected to protect others from getting infected.
- If you don't get tested, stay home for 10 days after travel.
- Avoid being around people who are at increased risk for severe illness for 14 days, whether you get tested or not.
- Always follow state and local recommendations or requirements related to travel.
- If you develop any symptoms during your isolation, please follow the home isolation instructions for "if you have symptoms of COVID-19."

Should I wear a mask?

The CDC has updated mask guidelines for vaccinated and unvaccinated people. Masks don't replace hand washing and social distancing. (Please refer to the CDC website and your state and local guidelines for the most current mask recommendations.)

Is there a vaccine available for COVID-19?

The FDA has approved three COVID-19 vaccines, one made by Pfizer, one made by Moderna, and one made by Johnson and Johnson (Janssen). Vaccines are being distributed in a phased approach which began in December 2020. Check with your healthcare provider and/or employer to determine your vaccine eligibility once they are available in your region.

Direction for Individuals Who Have Received the Johnson & Johnson (Janssen) or Astra Zeneca Vaccine

The FDA and CDC have recognized potential serious adverse effects related to these two vaccines. If you have received the vaccine within the last 3 weeks and if you have any of the following symptoms, go to the Emergency Room for evaluation:

- Vision changes
- Eye pain
- Severe headache
- Facial numbness
- New neurological symptoms
- Shortness of breath
- Severe abdominal pain
- Back pain
- Leg pain
- Leg swelling
- New or unusual bruising or bleeding
- New appearance of tiny red spots on the skin

Source Materials: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and World Health Organization