



CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19)

Frequently Asked Questions

February 28, 2020

What is COVID-19?

Coronavirus Disease 2019 or COVID-19 (formerly known as 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)) is a new (“novel”) strain of Coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are known to cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to more severe illnesses such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

COVID-19 originated in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in December of 2019. Initially, most of the people infected were in the Hubei province. Since December, COVID-19 has been detected in over 50 countries internationally (on every continent except Antarctica).

In the U.S., as of February 27, 2020, a total of 60 people have been diagnosed with COVID-19. Twelve people contracted the virus through known travel-related exposure, and three people contracted the virus through person-to-person spread. There have been an additional 45 people with COVID-19 who were repatriated to the U.S. and quarantined from China and the Diamond Princess Cruise Ship.

How does COVID-19 Spread?

COVID-19 is spread from person to person, mostly through respiratory droplets from sneezing or coughing. It can also spread via close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands; touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching the mouth, nose, or eyes before washing one’s hand. Prior reports suggest that there may be a connection to animal exposures, but this is still being investigated.

The CDC defines close contact as being within approximately 6 feet of a person with COVID-19 for a prolonged period of time; close contact can occur while caring for, living with, visiting, or sharing a healthcare waiting area or room with a COVID-19 case OR having direct contact with infectious secretions of a COVID-19 case (e.g., being coughed on).

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.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

The main symptoms seen with COVID-19 are fever, cough, fatigue, and shortness of breath.

How is COVID-19 diagnosed?

The CDC recommends that a careful travel history be obtained from anyone who presents with a cough, fever, and/or shortness of breath. COVID-19 should be considered in any person with these symptoms who has had any of the following exposures within 14 days of onset symptoms: (1) travel to a geographic area with known COVID-19 widespread or sustained transmission and (2) close contact with any person confirmed or suspected to have COVID-19.

If, based on the patient history, exposures, and symptoms, COVID-19 is suspected, the healthcare professional will contact the CDC or local health department for instructions on testing. Testing for the virus is possible using a CDC-developed, FDA-approved COVID-19 test, that tests samples from the nose, throat, or lungs for COVID-19. At this time, testing for COVID-19 is conducted by the local health department in Emergency Departments.

Is COVID-19 serious?

COVID-19 can cause serious symptoms and even death in certain people. People at higher risk for severe symptoms are older adults and adults with underlying health issues. Of note this same population has an increased risk of serious illness from any respiratory or fever illness such as the common cold and influenza.

At this time, per the CDC, the COVID-19 mortality rate is 2.3%; however, in some regions of the world the COVID-19 mortality rate appears to be lower. In comparison, COVID-19 is far less lethal than some other outbreaks like SARS (10% death rate) and Bird Flu (60% death rate) and Ebola (70% death rate). The vast majority of those infected with COVID-19 have reported mild-to-moderate symptoms and have fully recovered.

Can COVID-19 be treated?

Yes, COVID-19 is treated supportively, just like other respiratory or fever illness like a cold or flu. Fever control with Tylenol or Motrin, fluids, rest, and cold medication can help ease the symptoms. People with severe symptoms should promptly seek medical care. Antiviral medications are currently being investigated as a potential treatment, but they are not yet widely available.

Can COVID-19 be prevented?

The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to this virus. However, the CDC recommends the following preventative actions to help prevent becoming infected and preventing the spread of respiratory viruses, including:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Wipe down surfaces and frequently touched objects and surfaces with water and detergent.
- If there is a known outbreak in your area, stay 3-5 feet away from people who are sick and avoid crowded locations.
- Avoid going out if you are sick.
- Avoid traveling to areas where there are known outbreaks.

Where should I avoid traveling?

The CDC currently recommends that travel be limited or avoided in areas with widespread or sustained transmission. Specific travel recommendations include:

Travel Alert Level	Definition of Warning Level	Counties Affected
Warning Level 3	All non-essential travel should be avoided	China, South Korea
Alert Level 2	Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions should postpone non-essential travel	Iran, Italy, Japan
Watch Level 1	Canceling or postponing travel is not recommended, and usual precautions should be observed	Hong Kong

Travel Guidance Updates can be found on the CDC Website's "Coronavirus Disease 2019 Information for Travel" section

Is there a vaccine available for COVID-19?

Not yet. However, COVID-19 vaccine research and development work is taking place in countries throughout the world. There are early reports of potential vaccines, but further testing is required. At this point, researchers are estimating that it may take up to a year until a vaccine will be released.

Where can I find out more about COVID-19?

- COVID-19 Global Tracking Map: Johns Hopkins University Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) has created an interactive dashboard, to visualize and track reported cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) in real time. This publicly-available dashboard illustrates the location and number of confirmed COVID-19 cases, deaths, and recoveries for all affected countries. The global tracking map can be found through the Google search of "Global cases covid-19 and gisaid.org".
- Centers for Disease Control - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

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