

COVID-19: How Do We Stay Safe?

COVID-19 is a disease resulting from infection with a coronavirus named SARS-CoV-2. This disease can cause many symptoms but most notably respiratory symptoms which can become severe and result in low oxygen levels, causing one to feel short of breath. The virus has caused many millions of cases of COVID-19 and over 1 million deaths worldwide. This document is designed to provide practical guidance on how to avoid catching the virus as well as how to prevent spread in your community.

The number of cases has been increasing quickly and is considered a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO). As of November 2, 2020 there are 46,403,652 confirmed cases and 1,198,569 deaths worldwide. This means that the virus is being spread across the globe, and many countries, including the US, are experiencing surges of new cases. For up to date information on this outbreak, go to <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/index.html>.

Symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- Fever.
- Cough.
- Shortness of breath.
- Some people may have other symptoms such as fatigue, muscle aches, diarrhea, nasal 'cold' symptoms or even loss of smell or taste, stroke symptoms, or skin lesions.

Many people have no symptoms but are carrying the virus, and are called asymptomatic carriers and therefore pose the greatest risk for unknowingly transmitting the virus to another person.

Prevention and control of COVID-19 infection:

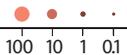
General principles

- Illness can range from asymptomatic, to mild, to severe.
- Elderly people and others with pre-existing medical illnesses like diabetes, heart, lung disease, obesity, cancer, immunosuppression and smokers are at the highest risk of dying from infection. However, anyone including pregnant women and even children can get the virus and become ill from it.
- Right now, the best way to lessen the virus' impact is to slow its spread. The actions listed in this fact sheet, including wearing masks and social distancing when outside the home, all help to do this.
- Everyone needs to do their best to avoid getting sick as well as spreading the virus to other people.
- You do not have to be sick or have symptoms to transmit the virus. This could have been one of the reasons that so many people got infected in the first place.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick unless you are a healthcare provider. If someone in your household is sick, help limit exposure as possible to others in the home.

Masks reduce airborne transmission

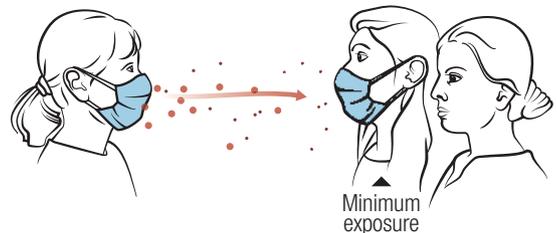
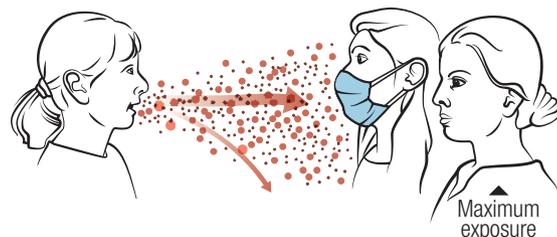
Infectious aerosol particles can be released during breathing and speaking by asymptomatic infected individuals. No masking maximizes exposure, whereas universal masking results in the least exposure.

Particle size (μm)



Infected, Asymptomatic

Healthy



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What you can do

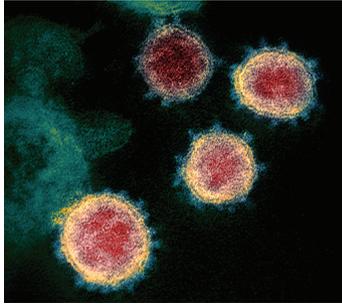
It is very important for people to follow basic infection control measures to help prevent COVID-19 and/or other viruses, like influenza. Do not let your guard down because of "pandemic fatigue" or stress. When people get lax (or sloppy) with taking these precautions, infection rates go up. Find ways to relieve stress and support each other safely.

Top actions to keep you and others safe

- Keep social distancing. Stay at least 6 feet away 'like a regular bicycle' from other people.
- Wear a facecovering whenever you are out of your home and around others. Masks block you spreading the virus and can reduce how much virus you might inhale. Wear a facecovering that covers both nose and mouth, and is snugly fitted on the chin. The best face coverings for you to use are medical masks or cloth masks with several layers. Bandanas and gaiters are not as effective. For more information about how and when to use masks, go to the ATS website at: <https://www.thoracic.org/patients/patient-resources/resources/face-coverings-pandemic.pdf>.
- Wash your hands often and for at least 20 seconds with soap and water. (Sing "Happy Birthday" twice). If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid being in large gatherings. Gatherings are strongly discouraged. Most states in the US are encouraging everyone to stay at home except for essential, infrequent trips to purchase food and medicines, or to attend healthcare visits. You can exercise outdoors with social distancing. Restaurants, indoor gyms

and coffee shops have been linked to increased spread of the virus, so you have to really consider your risk spending time in any public place.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Quarantine if you have close contact with a person who is COVID-19 positive. It may take up to 14 days to develop symptoms once exposed to this virus. If you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, you should stay home for at least 14 days.



SARS-CoV-2 is the virus that causes COVID-19 (NIAID)

Other ways to reduce your risk and avoid infection exposure to COVID-19 and other viruses

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched items and surfaces with a regular household cleaning spray followed by an EPA-approved disinfectant such as diluted bleach (0.1%) or alcohol solution (62-71%) or hydrogen peroxide (0.5%). COVID-19 can survive on surfaces for as long as 5 days. For full list of disinfectants, see <https://www.americanchemistry.com/Novel-Coronavirus-Fighting-Products-List.pdf>.
- Do not travel unless you really have to. Avoid public transportation if possible. This is especially important for older persons and others at risk for severe illness. The CDC maintains a regularly updated travel advisory site. If you travel to an area with high COVID infection, you may need to quarantine on your return home. Harvard's Global Health Institute and Edmond J Safra Center for Ethics has launched a new COVID-19 Risk Level map. This interactive map allows you to check the COVID-19 risk rating in your state or county. The map visually displays dots that are Green (on track for containment), Yellow (community spread), Orange (accelerated spread) or Red (tipping point). <https://globalepidemics.org/key-metrics-for-covid-suppression/>.
- Be sure to get your yearly flu vaccine and check with your healthcare provider to see if you need a pneumococcal vaccine.
- Keep a healthy lifestyle including healthy diet and sleep, physical activity/exercise. These behaviors are known to improve overall immunity against infections.
- No smoking or vaping.

What to do if you have symptoms

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow. Throw used tissues in the trash.
- Stay home when you are sick. If you are sick with COVID-19, you will need to stay home until:
 - ◆ you have no fever for 72 hours (without using fever reducing medicine).
 - ◆ at least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.
 - ◆ your other symptoms have improved. For additional information, see the CDC website at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>.

Treatment

- There is one recently FDA approved treatment for COVID-19 for people who have symptoms but are not in the hospital. There are several drugs and treatments being used in hospitalized patients with severe illness. Consider taking part in research studies to help learn more if you are asked to do so.
- Antibiotics do not treat COVID 19 or other viruses. They would only

be needed if you have a bacterial infection.

- People with COVID-19 are treated based upon their symptoms and the severity of illness. Most people will have a mild illness and get better.
- Many people can recover at home, but those with more severe illness may need to receive care in the hospital. Some people are so sick that they will need care in the intensive care unit (ICU).

Seek medical help

- If you think you have been exposed to COVID-19 and/or you have symptoms (fever or cough, or shortness of breath or any other symptoms described here), please call your doctor or healthcare professional first! They will assess you and determine if you need to be seen and tested. If so, you will be given instructions on what to do next. This will allow the office, clinic or acute care facility to get ready for your arrival and help you avoid spreading the virus to others.

Managing information during the pandemic

- If you receive a request from your local public health department or physician's office about contact tracing, please help them to the best of your ability.
- When a vaccine is available, talk to your healthcare provider about when you will be able to get it and any concerns you may have.
- Stay informed and rely ONLY on evidence-based sources such as the CDC, WHO, or local public health departments.
- Do not panic or get overwhelmed. There is hope.

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Resources

American Thoracic Society

- www.thoracic.org/patients
 - COVID-19 vs influenza
 - Face masks during a pandemic
 - Pneumonia vaccination

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC)

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/index.html>
- CDC General Hotline: 1-800-232-4636

World Health Organization (WHO)

- <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>

Johns Hopkins University COVID-19 Dashboard

- <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>

Harvard Global Health Institute-COVID-19 Suppression Framework

- <https://globalepidemics.org/key-metrics-for-covid-suppression/>

Healthdata.org

- <https://covid19.healthdata.org/united-states-of-america>
- Kimberly A. Prather, Chia C. Wang, Robert T. Schooley. Reducing transmission of SARS-CoV-2. *Science* 26 Jun 2020 : 1422-1424

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 Reducing transmission of SARS-CoV-2
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