

COVID-19 FACT SHEET

WHAT IS COVID-19?

Novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is a new virus strain spreading from person-to-person. Health experts are concerned because this new virus can cause severe illness and pneumonia in some people — especially people over age 60, people with certain health conditions (such as heart or lung disease, or diabetes) or weakened immune systems, and pregnant people.

DO ADULTS YOUNGER THAN 65 WHO ARE OTHERWISE HEALTHY NEED TO WORRY ABOUT COVID-19?

Yes, they do. Although the risk of serious illness or death from COVID-19 increases steadily with age, younger people can get sick enough from the disease to require hospitalization. And certain underlying medical conditions may increase the risk of serious COVID-19 for individuals of any age. People of any age should take preventive health measures like frequent hand washing, physical distancing, and wearing a mask when going out in public, to help protect themselves and to reduce the chances of spreading the infection to others.

WHAT ARE THE COMMON SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19?

Most coronavirus illnesses are mild with fever and cough. Some people infected with the virus have no symptoms. The majority of people with COVID-19 do not require hospital care. Adults and children with COVID-19 have reported the following symptoms or combinations of symptoms. The symptoms may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure to the virus. The average amount of days is 4-5 days between exposure and symptoms.

Children with COVID-19 usually have milder symptoms. We don't know yet whether some children may be at higher risk for severe illness, like children with underlying medical conditions and special health care needs. To learn more about COVID-19 symptoms, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website.

Symptoms:

- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fever – over 100 degrees
- Chills
- Muscle pain
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell
- Other signs of new illness that are unrelated to a preexisting condition (such as seasonal allergies)

HOW IS COVID-19 SPREAD?

Health experts are still learning more about how COVID-19 spreads. Currently, experts believe the virus spreads when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks close to other people. Droplets can enter the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or can be inhaled by people who are in close contact with one another. Aerosols are infectious viral particles that can float or drift around in the air for up to three hours. Another person can breathe in these aerosols and become infected with the coronavirus. This is why everyone should wear a mask and cover their nose and mouth when they go out in public.

Direct contact means being within 6 feet of someone for about 15 minutes, or if someone with COVID-19 coughed on you, kissed you, shared utensils with you, or you had direct contact with their body secretions.

The virus can also spread when a person touches a surface that has the novel coronavirus on it and then touches their own mouth, eyes, or nose. People infected with COVID-19 are thought to be most contagious when they are feeling sick, but it is possible that they can pass the virus to others up to 48 hours before symptoms begin.

Given what is known about transmission dynamics, adults and adult staff within schools should attempt to maintain a distance of 6 feet from other persons as much as possible, particularly around other adult staff.

CAN THE COVID-19 VIRUS SPREAD THROUGH AIR CONDITIONING?

We don't know for certain if the COVID-19 virus spreads through air conditioning. But we do know that when it's hot and humid, people are more likely to stay indoors, with the windows closed — giving the virus more opportunity to spread.

Coronavirus spreads through droplets that an infected person emits through coughs or sneezes and through smaller, infectious viral particles that can drift around in the air for several hours. Outdoors, air currents can scatter and dilute the virus, making transmission less likely. You're more likely to inhale the virus indoors, with the windows closed, whether or not you have the air conditioning on.

If you must be indoors with anyone outside of your household, increase air circulation by keeping the windows open as much as possible.

HOW LONG CAN THE COVID-19 VIRUS STAY AIRBORNE?

A study done by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases' Laboratory of Virology in the Division of Intramural Research in Hamilton, Montana helps to answer this question. The researchers used a nebulizer to blow coronaviruses into the air. They found that infectious viruses could remain in the air for up to three hours. The results of the study were published in the New England Journal of Medicine on March 17, 2020.

HOW LONG CAN THE COVID-19 VIRUS SURVIVE ON SURFACES?

A recent study found that the COVID-19 coronavirus can survive up to four hours on copper, up to 24 hours on cardboard, and up to two to three days on plastic and stainless steel. The researchers also found that this virus can hang out as droplets in the air for up to three hours before they fall. But most often they will fall more quickly.

There's a lot we still don't know, such as how different conditions, such as exposure to sunlight, heat, or cold, can affect these survival times.

As we learn more, we will continue to follow the CDC's recommendations for cleaning frequently touched surfaces and objects every day. These include counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables.

In addition, it is important to wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water after coming into contact with public surfaces.

WHO IS AT RISK FOR SEVERE ILLNESS FROM COVID-19?

While children who are infected with COVID-19 are more likely to be asymptomatic and less likely to experience severe disease (though a small subset become quite sick), they are capable of transmitting to both children and adults. Children are not currently a high-risk group for serious illness from this virus. Some children have certain health conditions, such as diabetes or weakened immune systems that put them at higher risk. People who are considered most at risk are those 60 years or older, people with health conditions such as heart or lung disease, diabetes, or weakened immune systems, and pregnant people. Again, this does not mean kids cannot get sick, and or cannot fall seriously ill, but older adults are far more susceptible.

HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF AND MY FAMILY FROM COVID-19?

The best ways to protect yourself and your family are to:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If not available, use hand sanitizer (60% alcohol or greater). Do not use sanitizer with children under age two.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home while you are sick and avoid close contact with others.
- Cover your mouth/nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects (like doorknobs and light switches). Regular household cleaners are effective.
- Follow Public Health's recommendations for slowing the spread of COVID-19, including working from home when possible, avoiding large gatherings, and practicing physical distancing by trying to stay 6 feet away from others when possible.

Travel increases your chance of getting and spreading COVID-19. Staying home is the best way to protect yourself and others from COVID-19. Please check your travel destination prior to

leaving and returning. If you or your family are traveling out of state, check for the latest CDC Travel Alerts for COVID at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/>.

Chicago travel order:

<https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/sites/covid-19/home/emergency-travel-order.html>

HOW IS COVID-19 TREATED?

There are no medications specifically approved for COVID-19. Most people with mild COVID-19 illness will recover on their own by drinking plenty of fluids, resting, and taking pain and fever-reducing medications. However, some cases develop pneumonia and require medical care or hospitalization.

Currently, there are no vaccines available to prevent COVID-19 infections.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF SOMEONE IN MY FAMILY HAS CONFIRMED OR SUSPECTED COVID-19?

- Anyone who is sick should stay home.
- If someone in your family has symptoms of COVID-19, call your healthcare provider.
- If someone in your household tests positive for COVID-19, notify the school and any other exposed parties.
- Anyone with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 should remain at home and away from others for at least 14 days from the onset of symptoms AND 72 hours (3 days) after fever has resolved (without fever-reducing medication) AND symptoms have improved.