

Introduction

COVID-19 stands for COronaVirus Disease - 2019. The disease is caused by a coronavirus. It was first identified in December 2019.

COVID-19 usually causes mild to moderate illness. But some cases have resulted in severe illness or death. People with certain health conditions and the elderly are at higher risk.

This reference summary explains COVID-19. It discusses its symptoms, treatment options and prevention methods.

Symptoms & Spread

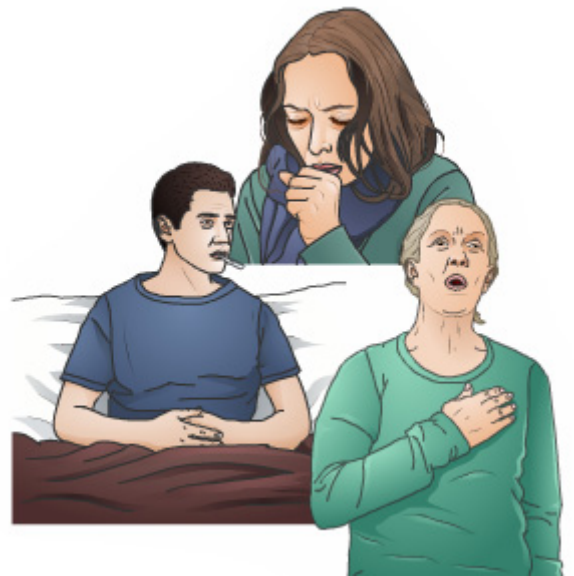
Many cases of COVID-19 are mild. In fact, some people don't have any symptoms. They may not know they are sick. But they can still pass the virus to others. These are called asymptomatic cases.

When patients do have signs and symptoms, they range from mild to very severe. They may include:

- Cough.
- Fever or chills.
- Difficulty breathing.

Other symptoms may include:

- Congestion or runny nose.
- Feeling tired.
- Headache.
- Muscle or body aches.
- New loss of taste or smell.
- Sore throat.



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Other possible symptoms include:

- Diarrhea, or loose and runny poop.
- Nausea, or feeling like you might throw up.
- Vomiting, or throwing up.

Some people have no symptoms, while others have many. Some people may have symptoms not listed.

COVID-19 is contagious. This means it can spread from one person to another. When a sick person breathes, talks, sings, sneezes or coughs, they can spread the virus to others. Standing 6 feet (2 meters) away from other people reduces your chances of getting sick. Buildings with good airflow are safer than those without.

You may also get sick by touching a surface with the virus on it and then touching your mouth, eyes or nose. But authorities believe that the illness spreads mainly by close contact with others.

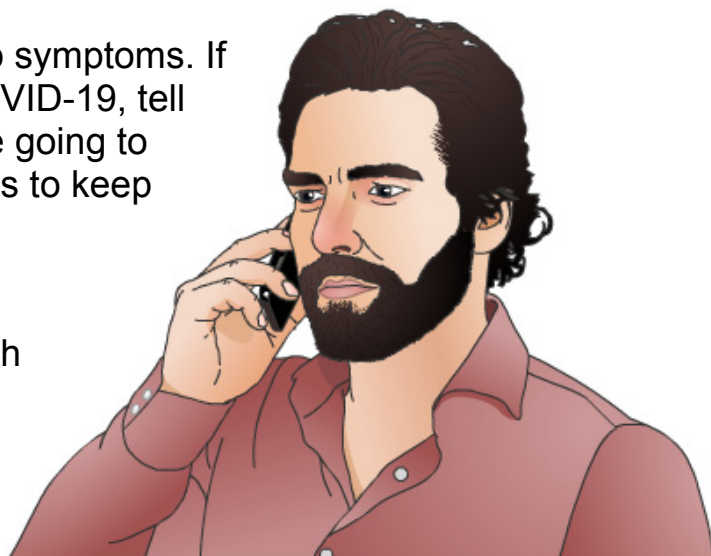


Symptoms usually show up 2 to 14 days after exposure to the virus. This means a person can carry and pass the virus to others for 2 weeks before they feel sick. Doctors call this pre-symptomatic spread.

Call your health care provider if you develop symptoms. If you were exposed to someone who has COVID-19, tell your health care provider. Call ahead before going to the health care facility so they can take steps to keep others safe.

Diagnosis

If you think you have COVID-19, call a health care provider right away. To protect others, call the office before you visit. Some public health websites have symptom checkers to help people decide whether they need to seek medical care. There may be local testing facilities in your area that can diagnose COVID-19.



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If you visit your health care provider, they will ask about your symptoms and personal and family medical history. They may also perform a physical exam and do other tests.

You should wear a mask before entering the health care facility and while you are there. Follow any instructions your health care team gives you.

Treatment & Complications

Certain medicines or breathing support may be used to treat COVID-19.

Most people recover on their own. Using a room humidifier or taking a hot shower may help ease coughing. Get plenty of rest and drink fluids.

You should stay away from other people and pets while you are sick. Use a separate bedroom and bathroom to protect housemates if you can. Don't leave the house except to visit a health care provider. They will tell you when you can be around others.

Some cases of COVID-19 can be severe or life threatening. This is more likely in people with certain health conditions.

These include:

- Cancer.
- Chronic kidney disease.
- COPD, or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.
- Heart problems such as heart failure, cardiomyopathy or coronary artery disease.
- Obesity, which means you have a body mass index (BMI) of 30 or more.

Other higher-risk conditions include:

- Pregnancy.
- Sickle cell disease.
- Smoking or history of smoking.
- Type 2 diabetes.
- Weakened immune system from a solid organ transplant.

The older a person is, the higher their risk of serious complications from COVID-19. People living in long-term care facilities or nursing homes are at higher risk of serious illness.



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Other individuals not mentioned here may have a higher risk of severe complications. To learn whether you or a loved one are at higher risk, visit [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).

Some patients with COVID-19 have developed blood clots. Blood clots happen when blood hardens in the blood vessels. This can block blood flow to important organs. Blood clots in the heart can lead to a heart attack. Blood clots in the brain can lead to a stroke. Blood clots in the lungs can be deadly.

Multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children, or MIS-C, is a rare disorder that can affect children exposed to COVID-19. MIS-C may cause organ damage and possibly death, but most children recover with medical care. Symptoms vary, but they may include:

- Fever.
- Abdominal or belly pain.
- Diarrhea.
- Neck pain.
- Rash.
- Red eyes.
- Tiredness.
- Vomiting.



Seek emergency medical care if you or your child has any of the following warning signs:

- Blue face or lips.
- Chest pain or pressure that does not go away.
- Difficulty breathing.
- Severe abdomen or belly pain.
- Sudden confusion.
- Trouble feeling or moving a part of your face or body.
- Trouble speaking.

If a person cannot be awakened or cannot stay awake, seek emergency medical attention.

Call a health care provider if you or a loved one has any concerning signs or symptoms.

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Prevention

Getting COVID-19 once does not guarantee that you won't get sick again. Getting vaccinated against COVID-19 protects you and your community. Talk with your health care provider to find out when you can receive the vaccine. Until it becomes widely available, continue taking the following precautions.

To prevent illness, everyone should avoid close contact with other people. This is called physical (social) distancing.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or CDC, recommends:

- Keeping a distance of 6 feet (2 meters) between yourself and others for those living in the US.
- Avoiding close contact with people outside of your household.
- Wearing a mask around others.
- Keeping objects and surfaces clean and disinfected.



You can protect others by covering your mouth and nose with a tissue or your elbow when you cough or sneeze.

Don't touch your eyes, nose or mouth to protect yourself and others from getting sick. Avoid sharing food, drinks or household items.

You could be sick without having any symptoms. This means you could unknowingly spread the virus to others. To protect those who may be at higher risk, please wear a mask in public. This is especially important when you cannot practice social distancing.

It is unsafe for certain people to wear masks. This includes:

- Children who are less than 2 years old.
- An unconscious person or anyone who would need help taking off the mask.
- Those who have trouble breathing.

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Everyone can help prevent the spread of infection by washing their hands often:

1. Wet your hands using clean running water.
2. Scrub your hands with soap for at least 20 seconds. Make sure to clean the top and bottom of your hands, around your thumbs, between your fingers and under your fingernails. Singing “happy birthday” twice is about how long it should take.
3. Use clean running water to rinse off the soap.
4. Use a clean towel to dry your hands and to turn off the faucet.



If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Rub the gel all over your hands until they are dry, about 20 seconds.

Clean and disinfect surfaces daily to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Touching a surface with germs on it and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth can make you and others sick.

Concerns about your wellbeing and that of others can be stressful and exhausting. Practicing healthy habits can improve your mood and help you feel your best. These include:

- Eating well.
- Staying active.
- Getting enough sleep.
- Connecting with loved ones.
- Making time for relaxation and activities you enjoy.



A seasonal flu shot will not protect you from COVID-19. But receiving a flu vaccine this fall is still recommended. It lowers your risk of being sick with the flu and COVID-19 at the same time. It also helps prevent serious complications of the flu.

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In addition, getting a flu vaccine helps conserve hospital resources so they can accommodate everyone who needs medical care. Because the flu vaccine may not be safe for everyone, please check with your health care provider before receiving it.

Summary

COVID-19 usually causes mild to moderate illness. But some cases have resulted in severe illness or death. People with certain health conditions and the elderly are at higher risk.

Symptoms usually happen about 2 to 14 days after coming in contact with the virus. Symptoms may include:

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Avoiding close contact and not touching your eyes, nose or mouth can help protect you and others from getting sick. Avoid sharing food, drinks or household items. Wear a mask around other people, especially when you cannot practice social distancing.

Everyone can help prevent the spread of infection by washing their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.



Our knowledge about how to treat and prevent COVID-19 is growing every day. For the most up-to-date information, turn to:

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or CDC, for those who live in the United States (www.cdc.gov).
- Local health authorities in your area.

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