

# What is COVID-19?

## (formerly “the Novel 2019-nCoV Coronavirus”)

COVID-19 is a new form of Coronavirus that causes acute infection with respiratory symptoms. This new virus is a different kind of Coronavirus than the ones that cause SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) or MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome). It is also different from the Coronavirus that causes seasonal infection in the U.S. The first cases of COVID-19 were seen in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China. As of March 2020, the virus has spread within China and to many other countries worldwide, including the U.S.



The number of cases has been increasing quickly and is now considered an “outbreak” by the World Health Organization (WHO) and US Centers for Disease Control (CDC). 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

### Prevention and control of COVID-19 infection:

#### General principles—

- There is no vaccine available at this time to prevent COVID-19. Researchers are working to develop one.
- Illness can range from mild to severe. Some people have died from their illness.
- People with advancing age or chronic conditions such as lung disease, heart disease, diabetes or immune problems are at a higher risk for severe illness. This is similar to the high risk groups for influenza.
- The key to prevention is to control the spread from person-to-person.
- People in the community can help control the spread by following basic infection control measures.

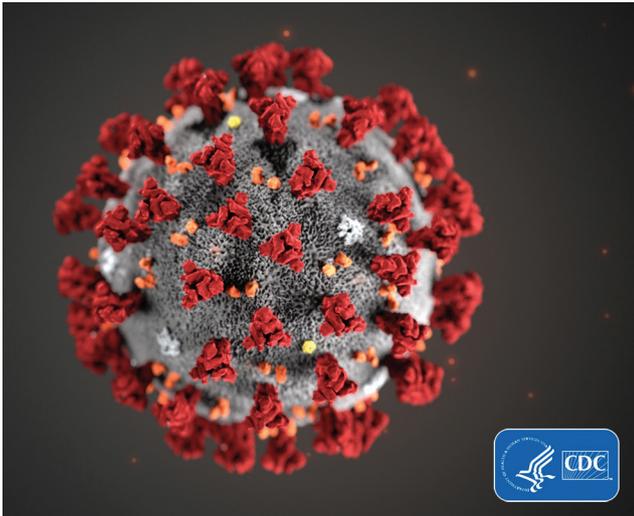
#### What you can do—

As noted, it is very important for people to follow basic infection control measures to help prevent COVID-19 and/or other viruses, like influenza. This includes the following actions:

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.



- Clean and disinfect frequently touched items and surfaces with a regular household cleaning spray or wipe. It is thought that the virus that causes COVID-19 may survive on surfaces for a few hours or up to several days.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.



SARS-CoV-2 is the virus that causes COVID-19

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay home if you are sick.



- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands.
- Avoid travel to areas affected heavily with the virus according to CDC recommendations.
- It may take up to 14 days to develop symptoms once exposed to this virus. If you have traveled to China or another area affected by this virus, you should stay home for at least 14 days.
- Stay informed and do not panic. Rely on evidence-based sources such as the CDC, WHO, or local public health departments.

#### *Treatment—*

- There is no specific treatment for COVID-19.
- People with this illness are treated based upon their symptoms and the severity of illness.
- Many people can recover at home, but those with more severe illness may need to receive care in the hospital.
- People who have or are likely to have this virus will need to wear a mask to help control the spread of virus to others.

#### *Seek medical help—*

- If you think you have been exposed to COVID-19 and you have symptoms (fever or cough or shortness of breath), you should get medical attention right away.
- Some doctors' offices or emergency departments advise that you call before you arrive, if possible, so that they can be ready for your arrival and help you avoid spreading the virus to others.

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#### Resources

##### **American Thoracic Society**

- [www.thoracic.org/patients](http://www.thoracic.org/patients)

##### **CDC**

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

##### **WHO**

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

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