

American Institutes for Research

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Coronavirus/COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions[\[1\]](#)

Q: How do I know if I might have Coronavirus/COVID-19?

A: Current symptoms reported for patients with COVID-19 have included mild to severe respiratory illness with fever, cough, and difficulty breathing. Call your doctor for medical advice if you have these symptoms and you think you have been exposed to COVID-19.

Q: Could I have Coronavirus/COVID-19 and not have symptoms?

A: Some spread might be possible before people show symptoms, but they don't think that this is the main way the virus spreads. Health professionals say that people are likely the most contagious when they are the sickest (when they have the most severe symptoms).

Q: Should I be tested for Coronavirus/COVID-19?

A: If you have fever, cough, and/or difficulty breathing, and have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19 or have recently traveled from an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19, stay home and call your doctor.

Those who are high risk should contact their doctor at early signs of illness even with mild symptoms. High risk groups include:

- 1) People who are older OR
- 2) People who have severe ongoing medical conditions (such as heart disease, diabetes, and lung disease) OR
- 3) People with a weakened immune system

If you have severe symptoms, such as lasting pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion or inability to arouse, or bluish lips or face, contact your doctor or emergency room and seek care immediately. Your doctor will decide if you have signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and whether you should be tested.

Q: How does Coronavirus/COVID-19 spread?

A: Mainly person-to-person through saliva or mucus (spit or snot) that people produce when they cough or sneeze. Maintaining social distance means staying about 6 feet away from others. This can reduce your risk of getting Coronavirus/COVID-19 OR of passing it to someone else.

Q: Can I get Coronavirus/COVID-19 from touching a table that someone touched while they were sick?

A: This might be possible, but health professionals don't think this is the main way the virus spreads.

Q: How can I avoid getting Coronavirus/COVID-19 or passing it to other people?

A: Avoid shaking hands, avoid touching your face, cover your mouth with your elbow when coughing, and wash hands often.

Q: Is this just another flu?

A: Not really. It's different than other types of the flu in a couple of ways. ^[2]

1) For the "regular flu", about 0.5% of people who get it die. For Coronavirus, about 3.5% of people die. ^[3]

2) Vaccines help control how fast illnesses spread. We do have vaccines for the "regular flu" which slows down how fast it spreads. We don't have a vaccine for Coronavirus yet.

BUT - the good news is, preventing Coronavirus is the same as preventing other kinds of viruses: avoid shaking hands, avoid touching your face, cover your mouth with your elbow when coughing, and wash hands frequently.

Q: Why are different states responding differently?

A: State governments are responding based on the number of Coronavirus/COVID-19 cases they have found. Sometimes, when people test positive, they can trace a connection to others who have tested positive. For example, someone may have recently traveled to a country with lots of cases. Or maybe a neighbor or a friend tested positive.

Other times, a person can test positive but they can't pinpoint a specific connection to others who have tested positive. They're not sure where they were exposed to it. This is called "community spread".

State governments may respond differently when there is community spread than when they can trace connections to others who have tested positive.

Q: Why are schools closing Why are people being told to avoid large gatherings?

A: Coronavirus/COVID-19 spreads through person-to-person contact. In large groups, more people have a chance of getting it or passing it to someone else. Illnesses like this can spread quickly, and it is hard for doctors and hospitals to take care of everyone if lots of people get sick at the same time. (Keep in mind that they are also taking care of people with other health problems - car accidents and other emergencies, for example.) Health professionals are trying to slow down how quickly Coronavirus/COVID-19 spreads so that they can give the best care possible to those who need it.

For example, many grocery stores are out of toilet paper because lots of people went in and bought it at the same time. Grocery stores now need a chance to recover and re-stock their supplies. Similarly, if lots of people get sick at the same time, then hospitals could run out of the supplies they need to take care of people. If we slow down the spread of illness by avoiding large crowds, then hospitals have a chance to recover and they would have the supplies they need to take care of people.

Q: Social distancing, "shelter in place", quarantine -- what do these terms mean?

A: Social distancing means avoid large groups. Generally, this means try to avoid being around 10 people or more. "Shelter in place" means stay in your home and only leave if you must. The

specifics of a shelter in place vary depending on the specific instructions that your state health leaders give. "Quarantine" is for people who are sick or who have been exposed to someone who is sick. It means that you should stay away from others to avoid getting someone else sick.

Q: How can people stop stigma related to Coronavirus/COVID-19?

A: Counter stigma by learning and sharing facts. Communicate the facts:

- viruses *do not* target specific racial or ethnic groups
- COVID-19 actually spreads through saliva or mucus that people produce when they cough or sneeze.

Sharing these facts can help stop stigma.

[1]Note: The Center for Disease Control (CDC) is the national source for expertise and information on preventing and controlling the spread of illnesses. For more information, visit the CDC website:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/whats-new-all.html>

[2] For more information, see:

[https://www.sciencealert.com/the-new-coronavirus-isn-t-like-the-flu-but-they-have-one-big-thing-in-commo](https://www.sciencealert.com/the-new-coronavirus-isn-t-like-the-flu-but-they-have-one-big-thing-in-common)
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[3] Even though 3.5% death is still a smallish percent, the faster it spreads, the more people get it -- 3.5% of 1,000 is 35 people who die. 3.5% of 10,000 means that 350 people die. That's one reason they're telling people to avoid big groups - to control how fast it spreads.
