

HealthWiki >

Coronavirus — COVID-19

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a disease caused by a coronavirus, which is a small germ (too small to see without a microscope), that can spread between people. COVID-19 causes flu-like symptoms such as a dry cough, shortness of breath, fever, weakness and body aches. COVID-19 mostly affects the respiratory system. While most infections are not dangerous, it can damage the lungs and cause pneumonia (a serious infection of the lungs) and can be deadly in severe cases.

How does coronavirus spread?

Coronavirus enters your body through the mouth, nose, and eyes when an infected person breathes, talks, coughs, or sneezes into the air near you or on surfaces you touch, and you then touch your eyes, nose or mouth. Most people start feeling sick about 5 days after getting infected, but coronavirus can live in the body for 2 to 14 days before signs of illness appear. And some people, especially children, can be infected but have no signs of illness. So people can have coronavirus and not know it, and transmit the virus to others. Coronavirus spreads more easily indoors and in crowds than in the open air.

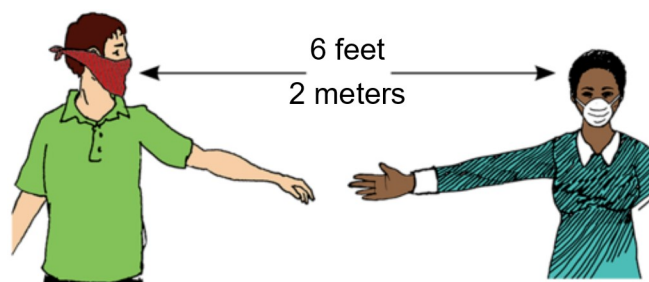


Who does coronavirus infect?

Anyone can get coronavirus. If you get it and recover, you can get infected again. Adults more than 45 years old, especially the elderly, and people who already have respiratory illnesses, diabetes, heart problems, and weakened immune systems, are at greater risk to get COVID-19 and experience more severe effects. As more people are vaccinated, the less the virus will be able to spread.

How can you prevent infection?

Getting vaccinated is the best way to prevent COVID-19 infection in yourself and others. Until vaccines are available to everyone, you can prevent coronavirus from spreading in your community by wearing masks when outside the home, keeping your distance from others, and cleaning your hands and shared surfaces. Coronavirus is not killed by antibiotics or home



Staying away from others and wearing a mask protects you. When everyone wears masks, fewer people will get sick with COVID-19.

remedies.

- **Wear a mask:** Wearing a mask or other face covering in public helps keep you safe. Wear a cloth or a paper mask that is clean, dry, and covers your mouth and nose completely, and try not to touch it. Because a person can be infected without knowing it, wearing a simple cloth mask can stop COVID-19 from spreading when everyone uses one. Using a face covering may be hot or uncomfortable. Just as health workers get used to them, we can too, in order to keep loved ones and ourselves safe. Wash cloth masks regularly.
- **Keep 2 meters (6 feet) away** from people outside your household.
- **Move necessary interactions with others to outdoors** to lessen the amount of virus you come in contact with. But you still need to wear a mask!
- **Wash your hands frequently** with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand-rub.
 - Wash vigorously with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, making sure to clean your entire hand, wrist, and lower arm.
 - Always wash hands when returning home, after using the bathroom, before meals, and after you cough, sneeze, or blow your nose. Avoid touching your face without first washing your hands.
- **If you or someone you live with has coronavirus, clean surfaces (such as countertops, doorknobs, etc.) that might have coronavirus on them, using soap and water, alcohol or bleach:**
 - **Alcohol:** Isopropyl alcohol in a 70% concentration will kill the coronavirus germ quickly. Use it to clean surfaces such as countertops, doorknobs, and equipment. A 60% to 70% solution works best; do not use 100% because it needs water to kill germs. If your alcohol is 100%, then add water in a ratio of 1 cup water to 2 cups of alcohol.
 - **Bleach:** Bleach usually comes in a 5% solution. Add cold water (hot water will not work) to dilute it. For floors and large surfaces, use 2 cups bleach in a 5 gallon bucket of water (500 ml bleach in 20 liters water).

Limit physical contact with other people

If getting vaccines is still difficult and you think there is coronavirus in your area, stay at home. Avoid people other than those you live with. All of you should avoid contact with others. Try to stay away from crowded areas where you might come into close contact with people.



This can be both difficult to do and emotionally depressing. Limiting contact does not have to mean total isolation: Talk with people on the phone instead of in person. Talk with people through windows and doors. Talk with others outdoors and in person by standing two meters (six feet) apart.

If you are healthy, help others in your community who are ill or most

threatened by the virus due to age, disability, etc., by arranging ways for them to get food, clean water, and supplies without leaving their homes. Helping everyone get vaccinated is the best way to bring this COVID-19 period of separation to an end.

- **Use a mask when caring for a sick person** if the person might have coronavirus. N95 respirator masks give the best protection. Choose one without valves. If using a cloth mask, use one with at least 2 or 3 layers. To use a mask properly:
 - Clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water, then cover your mouth and nose with the mask, making sure there are no gaps between your face and the mask.
 - Do not touch the mask while wearing it, and replace it with a new one if it becomes damp.
 - To remove the mask, use the straps to take it off (don't touch the mask itself). If you are discarding it, put it in a closed bin, and clean your hands.
 - It is best not to reuse medical masks. If you must reuse an N95 respirator mask, bake it at 160°F (72°C) for 30 minutes to disinfect it. Or, if you have at least 5, put each in a separate bag and rotate their use so you only use each mask once every 5 days.
- **Monitor your health.** If you have a dry cough, difficulty breathing, chest pain or pressure, and a fever, first call your doctor or the local health official for instruction about how and where to get treatment. Because the most serious danger from COVID-19 is inability to breathe, treatment for severe cases will include oxygen and a mechanical ventilator, available only in health care facilities.

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This page was updated:03 Sep 2021