



# Coronavirus/COVID-19 | FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is the national source for expertise and information on preventing and controlling the spread of illnesses. For up-to-date information about COVID-19, visit <https://coronavirus.gov>.

As of March 2020, government officials and healthcare agencies continue to provide frequent updates on COVID-19. You can get these updates from TV and newspapers.



## How do I know if I might have COVID-19?

Symptoms reported for patients with COVID-19 include mild to severe illness with fever, cough, and difficulty breathing. Call your doctor for medical advice if you have these symptoms and think you have been exposed to COVID-19. If you don't have a doctor you can call, then call your public health department or your local community health center.

Severe symptoms may include difficulty breathing, lasting pain or pressure in the chest, confusion, extreme drowsiness, or bluish lips or a bluish face. If you have severe symptoms, contact your doctor or emergency room and **seek care immediately. Dial 911, or call before you go to a doctor's office or emergency room** to tell them you are coming.



## Could I have COVID-19 and not have symptoms?

Yes. Health professionals believe people may have COVID-19 and not have symptoms for a few days. But experts at the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) don't think this is the main way COVID-19 spreads. Health professionals say that people likely are the most contagious when they are the sickest (when they have the most severe symptoms).



## Should I be tested for COVID-19?

If you have a cough or fever and you have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19, or if you have recently traveled from an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19, stay home and call your doctor or public health department. Your doctor will decide if you have signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and whether you should be tested.

People who are at high risk of being infected with COVID-19 should contact their doctor at the first signs of illness, even if they have mild symptoms. High-risk groups include:

1. People who are older (typically over age 65) OR
2. People who have severe, ongoing health problems (such as heart disease, diabetes, asthma, sickle cell anemia, COPD, or other lung disease) OR
3. People with a weakened immune system (such as people with HIV or those who have had an organ transplant)
4. Pregnant women



## How does COVID-19 affect children?

Health professionals are still learning new information. But children who get COVID-19 usually have mild symptoms. These symptoms include fever, runny nose, and cough. Some children could get sick to their stomach (vomit or diarrhea).

To prevent COVID-19 in children, clean their hands often using soap and water or alcohol-based sanitizer. Also clean household surfaces such as tables, chairs, doorknobs, light switches, remotes, toilets, and sinks.



## How does COVID-19 spread?

COVID-19 spreads from person to person through tiny drops of saliva or mucus that people produce when they cough or sneeze. To reduce your risk of getting COVID-19 or passing it to someone else, stay about 6 feet away from others. This is called “social distancing.”



## Can I get COVID-19 from touching a table that someone touched while they were sick?

It may be possible to get COVID-19 this way, but health professionals don't think this is the main way the virus spreads.



## How can I avoid getting COVID-19 or passing it to other people?

Here are steps you can take:

- Practice social distancing, which means staying about 6 feet away from others.
- Avoid shaking hands.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Cover your mouth with your elbow when you cough or sneeze.
- Wash your hands often. Wash them for 20 seconds, especially after coughing, sneezing, blowing your nose, or going to the bathroom. Also, wash your hands before eating or preparing food.



## Is this just another flu?

No. COVID-19 is different from other types of the flu in several ways. Here are two examples:

1. About 0.5% of people die from the “regular flu.” About 3.5% of people die from COVID 19. But the faster COVID-19 spreads, the greater the possibility that more people will die.
2. Vaccines help control how fast illnesses spread. We have vaccines for the “regular flu,” which slows down how fast it spreads. We don’t have a vaccine for COVID-19 yet.

BUT, there’s good news. Preventing COVID-19 is the same as preventing other kinds of viruses. Avoid shaking hands, avoid touching your face, cover your mouth with your elbow when you cough or sneeze, and wash your hands frequently.

For more information about the differences between COVID-19 and the flu, visit <https://www.sciencealert.com/the-new-coronavirus-isn-t-like-the-flu-but-they-have-one-big-thing-in-common>.



## Why are states responding differently?

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

Other times, a person tests positive for COVID-19, but they can’t pinpoint a connection to others who tested positive. They’re not sure where they were exposed to the virus. This is called “community spread.” State governments may respond differently when there is community spread.



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

COVID-19 spreads through person-to-person contact. In large groups, more people have a chance of getting the virus or passing it to someone else. Viruses can spread quickly, and it is hard for doctors and hospitals to take care of everyone if many people get sick at the same time. Keep in mind that hospitals are also taking care of people with other health needs, such as childbirth, car accidents, or other emergencies. Health professionals are trying to slow down how quickly COVID-19 spreads so they can help all people who need care.

For example, many grocery stores are out of toilet paper because large numbers of people bought it at the same time, and in large amounts. Grocery stores now need a chance to restock their supplies. Likewise, if many 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 will have the supplies they need to take care of people.



## Isolation, quarantine, social distancing, “shelter in place” . . . what do these terms mean?

Here are some definitions:

- **Isolation** is for people who already have COVID-19. It means keeping them separated from people who don't have the virus. For example, hospitals are isolating people with COVID-19 from other patients.
- **Quarantine** is for people who may have been exposed to someone who is sick. It means you should stay away from others to avoid getting someone else sick. This usually means staying at home and avoiding contact with other people for 14 days.
- **Social distancing** is for everyone! It means staying about 6 feet away from others and avoiding being around groups of 10 or more people. Keeping people farther apart can slow down the spread of COVID-19.
- **Shelter in place** means staying in your home and leaving only if you must. Shelter-in-place instructions differ based on information from your state leaders.



## What is a pandemic?

Here are some definitions:

- An **outbreak** is a sudden, unexpected increase in the number of people with a disease, usually in a relatively small geographic area, like a city. An example is a cluster of TB cases in Chicago.
- An **epidemic** is an outbreak that spreads to a large geographic area, like a whole country or region. An example is the Ebola virus in West Africa in 2016.
- A **pandemic** happens when an outbreak goes global, covering several countries or continents. An example is the flu virus in 1918—or COVID-19 right now.



## How can people stop stigma related to COVID-19?

Counteract stigma by learning and sharing facts. Communicate the facts:

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

Sharing these facts can help stop stigma.



## Can I still get food delivered to my home?

Yes. Restaurants follow safety guidelines for food preparation and sanitation. You can use drive-through, pickup, or delivery options.



## What if I need help finding food during the COVID-19 pandemic?

If you need help finding food, housing, utility assistance, employment supports, internet access, childcare support, mental health resources, drug and alcohol treatment, or other basic needs, call **211** to speak to someone who can help.

In many states, dialing “211” gives people in need a chance to speak with someone who can try to connect them with agencies and organizations that offer help in their area. 211 is a 24/7 hotline that is connected to a trained team who will give you up-to-date information. You can dial 211 by phone, or visit [www.211.org](http://www.211.org) to see whether 211 services are offered in your area and to learn more information.

If you or your organization is offering help to those in need, please submit your information through the 211 website: <https://www.helplinecenter.org/when-disaster-strikes/>.

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