COVID-19 Factsheet

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is the disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. COVID-19 first presented as primarily a respiratory illness. We now know that this virus affects many different body systems. Vaccination significantly decreases the risk of severe illness or hospitalization, especially in those aged 65 years or older, or with certain underlying medical conditions.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Common symptoms include fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath or trouble breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion, runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea. This is not a complete list of all possible symptoms. Symptoms may vary depending on severity of the illness, variant of the virus, and vaccination or treatment status. Most people experience acute respiratory symptoms that are present for a cold, flu, or pneumonia. Although most people who get sick from COVID-19 will have mild symptoms, some people may become extremely ill and others may experience a combination of symptoms for several months.

How is COVID-19 spread?

COVID-19 spreads from an infected person when they speak, sing, cough, or sneeze. It is when these droplets come into contact with another person's nose, mouth, and eyes that their chances of being infected increases. This is why it is important to protect your eyes, nose, and mouth from infected droplets in the air. Other ways to reduce your risk of infection include: washing your hands, improving ventilation in your surroundings, avoiding crowded spaces with poor ventilation, wearing a mask around someone who is sick, or wearing a mask in public during times when virus infections are elevated. Staying home when you are sick can also reduce further spread.

How long are people contagious?

The contagious period varies, but people can begin spreading the virus two (2) days before symptoms appear, and for about ten (10) days after symptoms be.

Who gets COVID-19 disease?

Anyone can get COVID-19. However, in some people it may be more serious. Groups of people who may become more seriously ill include the elderly, those with chronic illnesses (such as lung disease, heart disease, cancer, or diabetes), pregnant women, those with weakened immune systems, and severely obese persons.

What treatment is available for people with COVID-19?

Rest, liquids, and over-the-counter medicine are the usual treatments. Those who have risk factors to become more seriously ill from COVID-19 should seek a health care provider as soon as possible for antiviral medications if indicated. Since COVID-19 is caused by a virus and *not* by bacteria, antibiotics do not treat COVID-19. Aspirin should not be given to children with COVID-19 because of the possibility of causing a complication called Reye's syndrome.

Do infected people need to be kept home from school, work, or daycare?

Yes. Stay home until symptoms have mostly improved and no fever is present for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication. When returning to normal day-to-day activities such as work or being around others, it is recommended to wear a mask for the next five (5) days to prevent the spread of the disease.

How can I protect myself and my family from getting COVID-19?

- It is recommended that everyone 6+ months of age or older receive the COVID-19 vaccination series, and boosters as age-appropriate.
- Wash hands frequently with water and soap. Teach children to wash their hands frequently, too. (Sanitizing gel may be substituted when hands are not visibly soiled.)
- Always cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze and then wash your hands.
- In some situations, antiviral medications may be used to prevent or treat COVID-19. Talk to your health care provider for more information.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Encourage people who are sick to stay home.