

COVID-19

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is 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 65 and older or with certain underlying 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 or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea. This is not a complete list of all possible symptoms. Symptoms may vary depending on the severity and variant of this illness and vaccine status.

A person with COVID-19 may have no symptoms, mild symptoms, or severe symptoms. Some people become seriously ill and may need to go to the hospital.

How is COVID-19 spread?

COVID-19 spreads by droplets from an infected person. This person could be speaking, coughing, sneezing, or singing. These droplets come in contact with another person's mucous membranes of the nose, mouth, and eyes.

How long are people contagious?

The contagious period varies, but people can begin to spread the virus 2 days before symptoms appear and for about 10 days after their symptoms first appear. For people who have no symptoms, they are contagious for 2 days before the specimen collection date that resulted in a positive test and for about 10 days after the specimen collection date.

Who gets COVID-19 disease?

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

What treatment is available for people with COVID-19?

Rest, liquids, and over-the-counter medicine are the usual treatments. Those who may become more seriously ill from COVID-19 should see a health care provider as soon as possible for antiviral medications as needed. Since the COVID-19 is caused by viruses, *not* by bacteria, antibiotics will not work to treat the patient. 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?

People who are sick should stay home for at least 5 days after symptoms start and until they feel well enough to return and have not had a fever for 24 hours without taking any fever-reducing medication. Everyone should wear a high-quality mask for 5 more days when around others.

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

- Everyone >6 months of age should receive the COVID-19 vaccination series and boosters as age appropriate.

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- Wash hands frequently with water and soap. Teach children to wash their hands 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 the 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.