



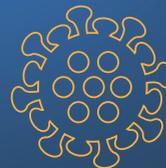
What is COVID-19 and how does it spread?

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a new virus (SARS-CoV-2).

The disease causes respiratory illness with signs and symptoms such as a cough, fever, fatigue, and in more severe cases, difficulty breathing. New symptoms recently identified in some patients include loss of taste and/or smell and red eyes.

You can protect yourself by washing your hands frequently, avoiding touching your face, and avoiding close contact with other people. Keep a safe distance from others of at least 1 meter or 3 feet.

The spread of COVID-19 from person to person is being driven by droplet transmission – the virus is carried in the small droplets that emerge from the noses or mouth, when a person with COVID-19 speaks, coughs or sneezes. Infection can also happen when a person touches a surface or object that has the virus on it, then touches their eyes, nose or mouth.



Related resources:



VIDEO:

[How is COVID-19 spread and how do you protect yourself against it?](#)



How can we protect ourselves and others if we don't know who is infected?

Practicing hand and respiratory hygiene is important at ALL times and is the best way to protect yourself and others

- If you have been in contact with someone with COVID-19, you may be contagious; therefore self-isolate to prevent spreading COVID-19 to others
 - Even if you develop very mild symptoms you must self-isolate
 - If you did not know you had been exposed to COVID-19 but develop symptoms, then self-isolate and monitor yourself
- Transmission is more likely in the early stages of the disease (due to the high viral loads at symptom onset); therefore early self-isolation is critical
- If you have had COVID-19 and your symptoms have disappeared, then self-isolate for 14 days after symptoms have disappeared as a precautionary measure – it is not yet known how long people remain infectious after they have recovered

Related resources:



VIDEO:

[How to wash your hands effectively](#)



VIDEO:

[How is COVID-19 spread and how do you protect yourself against it?](#)



Protective measures

You can protect yourself and help prevent the spread of the virus

- **Clean hands frequently** with soap and water for 40 seconds or with alcohol-based hand rub for 20 seconds
- **Avoid touching** your eyes, nose and mouth
- **Cover your nose and mouth with a disposable tissue** or flexed elbow when you cough or sneeze. If a tissue is used, discard it immediately and wash your hands
- **Avoid close contact** with others and keep a safe distance of at least 1 meter or 3 feet
- **Stay home** and self-isolate from others in the household if you feel unwell
- **Regularly clean** and disinfect surfaces frequently touched
- **Stay up-to-date** with information from trusted sources, such as WHO and your local health authority

If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical care early — but call by phone first, if possible

There are no specific vaccines or treatments for COVID-19 as yet. However, clinical trials are underway. WHO will continue to provide new information as it becomes available.

Related resources:



VIDEO:

[How to wash your hands effectively](#)



VIDEO:

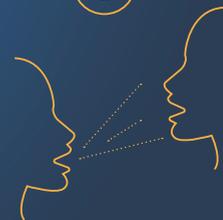
[How is COVID-19 spread and how do you protect yourself against it?](#)



Can people who do not have symptoms spread COVID-19?

There are reports of transmission in the presymptomatic period; which is on average 5-6 days between infection and developing actual symptoms

- Common symptoms of COVID-19 disease are dry cough, fever and fatigue. People with mild symptoms may think they have another infection such as a common cold. Additional symptoms such as loss of smell, loss of taste and red eyes have been reported in some COVID-19 patients
- Studies show that the viral load in COVID-19 patients is highest at symptom onset, or shortly afterwards. It is possible that patients could be infectious immediately before symptom onset^{1,2}; however the extent of transmission in the presymptomatic phase is not yet known
- COVID-19 spreads through respiratory droplets that can land on people who are less than 1 meter away. People with respiratory symptoms such as a cough, are more likely to transmit the disease than presymptomatic people



REFERENCES

1 <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.03.05.20030502v1>

2 [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099\(20\)30232-2/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099(20)30232-2/fulltext)



Self-isolation

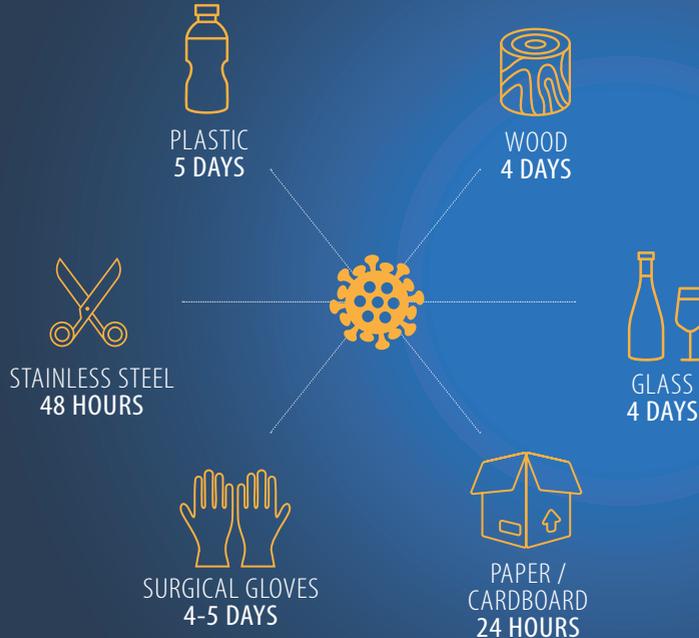
Self-isolation is an important measure to avoid infecting others in the community, including family members

- Self-isolation is when a person who is ill (i.e. fever or respiratory symptoms) voluntarily or based on his/her health care provider's recommendation, stays at home and does not go to work, school or public places
- If a person is in self-isolation, it is because he/she is ill but not severely ill (requiring medical attention)
- The person in self-isolation should ideally have a room at home that is separated from other family members. If not possible, spatial distance of at least 1 meter (3 feet) from other family members and the use of a medical mask is recommended for the ill person with respiratory symptoms. The person in self-isolation should have dedicated utensils, plates, cups, towels and linens
- The duration of self-isolation for a person with confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19 should be discussed with the healthcare provider and may require additional laboratory testing





How long human coronaviruses stay on surfaces



- Surface disinfections with 0.1% sodium hypochlorite (diluted bleach) or 62-71% ethanol is effective within 1 minute
- COVID-19 was NOT included in this study but to date, there is no indication that SARS-CoV-2 behaves differently to other coronaviruses

Source: J.Hosp.Infect. 2020.01