

COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions:ⁱ

1. What is the coronavirus?

The coronavirus is a (novel) new coronavirus that has not been previously identified. The virus causing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), is not the same as the coronaviruses that commonly occurs among humans and cause mild illness. A diagnosis with coronavirus 229E, NL63, OC43, or HKU1 is not the same as a COVID-19 diagnosis. Patients with COVID-19 will be evaluated and cared for differently than patients with common coronavirus diagnosis.

2. What is the name of the virus causing the outbreak of coronavirus disease?

On February 11, 2020, the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses, charged with naming new viruses, named the novel coronavirus, first identified in Wuhan, China, severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2, shortened to SARS-CoV-2. The virus is related to the SARS-associated coronavirus (SARS-CoV) that caused an outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in 2002-2003; however it is not the same virus.

3. What is the source of the virus?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Rarely, animal coronaviruses that infect animals have emerged to infect people and can spread between people. This is suspected to have occurred for the virus that causes COVID-19. Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) are two other examples of coronaviruses that originated from animals and then spread to people. More information about the source and spread of COVID-19 is available on the [Situation Summary: Source and Spread of the Virus](#).

4. How does the virus spread?

This coronavirus was first detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. The first infections were linked to a live animal market, but the virus is now spreading from person to person. It's important to note that person to person spread can happen on a continuum. Some viruses are highly contagious (like measles), while other viruses are less so.

The virus that causes COVID-19 seems to be spreading easily and sustainably in the community ("community spread") in [some affected geographic areas](#). Community spread means people have been infected with the virus in an area, including some who are not sure how or where they became infected. Learn what is known about the [spread of newly emerged coronaviruses](#).

5. Can an infected person spread the virus?

Yes, someone who is actively sick with COVID-19 can spread the illness to others. The CDC recommends that these patients be isolated either in the hospital or at home (depending on how sick they are) until they are better and no longer pose a risk of infecting others.

How long someone is actively sick can vary so the decision on when to release someone from isolation is made on a case by case basis in consultation with healthcare providers, infection prevention and control experts, and public health officials and involves considering specifics of each situation including disease severity, illness signs and symptoms, and results of laboratory testing for that patient.

Current [CDC guidance for when it is OK to release someone from isolation](#) is made on a case by case basis and includes meeting all of the following requirements:

- The patient is free from fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- The patient is no longer showing symptoms, including cough.
- The patient has tested negative on at least two consecutive respiratory specimens collected at least 24 hours apart.

6. Am I at risk for contracting the COVID-19 virus in the United States?

This is a rapidly evolving situation and the [risk assessment](#) may change daily. The latest updates are available on CDC's Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) website.

7. How can I protect myself from contracting COVID-19?

There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. The CDC always recommends everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, including:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then immediately throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19. Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is also crucial for [health workers](#) and [people who are taking care of someone in close settings](#) (at home or in a health care facility).
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

8. What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Reported illnesses have ranged from **mild symptoms to severe illness** and death for confirmed coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases. Symptoms may appear **2-14 days after exposure*** and include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

9. Should I be tested for COVID-19?

Call your healthcare professional if you feel sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, and have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19, or if you live in or have recently traveled from an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19. Your healthcare professional will work with your state's public health department and CDC to determine if you need to be tested for COVID-19.

10. What is the CDC doing about COVID-19?

This is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation and CDC will continue to provide updated information as it becomes available. CDC works 24/7 to protect people's health. More information about [CDC's response to COVID-19](#) is available online.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Frequently Asked Questions and Answers. Available from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#basics>; last updated February 2020.