

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Factsheet

Important Information drawn from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov)

Background

CDC is responding to an outbreak of respiratory disease caused by a novel (new) coronavirus that was first detected in China and which has now been detected in almost 70 locations internationally, including in the United States. The virus has been named “SARS-CoV-2” and the disease it causes has been named “coronavirus disease 2019” (abbreviated “COVID-19”).

The complete clinical picture with regard to COVID-19 is not fully understood. Reported illnesses have ranged from mild to severe, including illness resulting in death. While information so far suggests that most COVID-19 illness is mild, a report out of China suggests serious illness occurs in 16% of cases. ***Older people and people with certain underlying health conditions like heart disease, lung disease and diabetes, for example, seem to be at greater risk of serious illness.***

The fact that this disease has caused illness, including illness resulting in death, and sustained person-to-person spread is concerning. These factors meet two of the criteria of a pandemic. As community spread is detected in more and more countries, the world moves closer toward meeting the third criteria, worldwide spread of the new virus. Reported community spread of COVID-19 in parts of the United States raises the level of concern about the immediate threat for COVID-19 for those communities. The potential public health threat posed by COVID-19 is very high, to the United States and globally.

How the Virus Spreads

Person-to-person spread - The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

Can someone spread the virus without being sick?

- People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest).
- Some spread might be possible before people show symptoms; there have been reports of this occurring with this new coronavirus, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

Spread from contact with infected surfaces or objects

- It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

How easily the virus spreads

- How easily a virus spreads from person-to-person can vary. Some viruses are highly contagious (spread easily), like measles, while other viruses do not spread as easily. Another factor is whether the spread is sustained, spreading continually without stopping.
- The virus that causes COVID-19 seems to be spreading easily and sustainably in the community (“community spread”) in some affected geographic areas.

The CDC provides a number of specific recommendations regarding preventative measures you can take:

General Preventative Measures

- Avoid close contact - Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
- Stay home when you are sick - If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. This will help prevent spreading your illness to others.
- Cover your mouth and nose - Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick. Flu and other serious respiratory illnesses are spread by cough, sneezing, or unclean hands.
- Clean your hands - Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth - Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Practice other good health habits - Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at home, work or school, especially when someone is ill. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.
- If you are a resident in a community where person-to-person spread of COVID-19 has been detected and you develop COVID-19 symptoms, call your healthcare provider and tell them about your symptoms.
- For people who are ill with COVID-19, but are not sick enough to be hospitalized, please follow CDC guidance on how to reduce the risk of spreading your illness to others. People who are mildly ill with COVID-19 are able to isolate at home during their illness.

Workplace Preventative Measures

- Find out about your employer's plans if an outbreak of flu or another illness occurs and whether flu vaccinations are offered on-site.
- Routinely clean frequently touched objects and surfaces, including doorknobs, keyboards, and phones, to help remove germs.
- Make sure your workplace has an adequate supply of tissues, soap, paper towels, alcohol-based hand rubs, and disposable wipes.
- Train others on how to do your job so they can cover for you in case you or a family member gets sick and you have to stay home.
- If you begin to feel sick while at work, go home as soon as possible.

Please also remain in regular contact with family and friends so as to be able to check in and monitor the health of your loved ones (and to allow them to monitor your health as well).

This is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation and CDC will provide updated information as it becomes available, in addition to updated guidance. Here are some additional reputable information sources:

CDC - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

World Health Organization - <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

Illinois Department of Public Health:

800.889.3931 - COVID-19 Questions Hotline

Dph.sick@illinois.gov - COVID-19 Questions

Hand Washing - www.cdc.gov/handwashing

Myths and Facts:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters>