

Frequently Asked Questions On Coronaviruses (COVID-19)

Adapted from Q&A on coronaviruses (COVID-19)

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

Q.1 What is COVID 19?

COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus, first detected in Wuhan, China, in December 2019.

Q.2 What are the symptoms of COVID 19?

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, tiredness, and dry cough. Some patients may have aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat or diarrhea. These symptoms are usually mild and begin gradually. Most people (about 80%) recover from the disease without needing special treatment. Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like high blood pressure, heart problems or diabetes, are more likely to develop serious illness. People with fever, cough and difficulty breathing should seek medical attention.

Q.3 Does every person infected with Coronavirus show symptoms?

Some people become infected but don't develop any symptoms and don't feel unwell. Around 1 out of every 6 people who gets COVID-19 becomes seriously ill and develops difficulty breathing.

Q.4 How does COVID 19 spread?

People can catch COVID-19 from others who have the virus. The disease can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth which are spread when a person with COVID-19 coughs or exhales. These droplets land on objects and surfaces around the person. Other people then catch COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. People can also catch COVID-19 if they breathe in droplets from a person with COVID-19 who coughs out or exhales droplets. This is why it is important to stay more than 1 meter (3 feet) away from a person who is sick.

Q.5 Can the virus that causes COVID 19 be transmitted through air?

Studies to date suggest that the virus that causes COVID-19 is mainly transmitted through contact with respiratory droplets rather than through the air. The virus that causes COVID-19 is mainly transmitted through droplets generated when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or speaks. **These droplets are too heavy to hang in the air. They quickly fall on floors or surfaces.**

Q.6 Can COVID 19 be caught from a person who has no symptoms?

The main way the disease spreads is through respiratory droplets expelled by someone who is coughing. The risk of catching COVID-19 from someone with no symptoms at all is very low. However, many people with COVID-19 experience only mild symptoms. This is particularly true at the early stages of the disease. It is therefore possible to catch COVID-19 from someone who has, for example, just a mild cough and does not feel ill.

Q.7 How can I protect myself?

You can reduce your chances of being infected or spreading COVID-19 by taking some simple precautions:

- Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water.

Why? Washing your hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand rub kills viruses that may be on your hands.

- Maintain at least 1 meter (3 feet) distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.

Why? When someone coughs or sneezes they spray small liquid droplets from their nose or mouth which may contain virus. If you are too close, you can breathe in the droplets, including the COVID-19 virus if the person coughing has the disease.

- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth.

Why? Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth. From there, the virus can enter your body and can make you sick.

- Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately.

Why? Droplets spread virus. By following good respiratory hygiene you protect the people around you from viruses such as cold, flu and COVID-19.

- Stay home if you feel unwell. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and call in advance. Follow the directions of your local health authority.

Why? National and local authorities will have the most up to date information on the situation in your area.

- Keep up to date on the latest COVID-19 hotspots (cities or local areas where COVID-19 is spreading widely). If possible, avoid traveling to places – especially if you are an older person or have diabetes, heart or lung disease.

Why? You have a higher chance of catching COVID-19 in one of these areas.

Q.8 How likely am I to catch COVID 19?

For most people in most locations the risk of catching COVID-19 is still low. The risk is higher if you are in contact with someone who has a history of travel to other countries or who has the active infection or have some illnesses such as Diabetes, cancer etc. Since it is difficult to make out who is having the infection, social distancing is the best strategy.

Q.9 Should I worry about COVID 19?

Illness due to COVID-19 infection is generally mild, especially for children and young adults. However, it can cause serious illness: about 1 in every 5 people who catch it need hospital care. It is therefore quite normal for people to worry about how the COVID-19 outbreak will affect them and their loved ones.

We can channel our concerns into actions to protect ourselves, our loved ones and our communities. First and foremost, among these actions is regular and thorough hand-washing and good respiratory hygiene. Secondly, keep informed and follow the advice of the local health authorities including any restrictions put in place on travel, movement and gatherings.

Q.10 Are antibiotics effective in preventing or treating the COVID 19?

No. Antibiotics do not work against viruses, they only work on bacterial infections. COVID-19 is caused by a virus, so antibiotics do not work.

Q.11 Are there any medicines or therapies that can prevent or cure COVID 19?

Till today, there is no medicine that will prevent or cure COVID 19. WHO does not recommend self-medication with any medicines, including antibiotics, as a prevention or cure for COVID-19.

Q.12 Is there a vaccine for preventing COVID 19?

Not yet. To date, there is no vaccine and no specific antiviral medicine to prevent or treat COVID-2019. However, those affected should receive care to relieve symptoms. People with serious illness should be hospitalized. Most patients recover thanks to supportive care.

Q.13 Is COVID 19 the same as SARS?

No. The virus that causes COVID-19 and the one that caused the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003 are related to each other genetically, but the diseases they cause are quite different.

Q.14 Should I wear a mask to protect myself?

Only wear a mask if you are ill with COVID-19 symptoms (especially coughing) or looking after someone who may have COVID-19. Disposable face mask can only be used once. If you are not ill or looking after someone who is ill then you are wasting a mask. There is a world-wide shortage of masks, so WHO urges people to use masks wisely.

Q.15 How do you use, take off and dispose a mask?

1. Remember, a mask should only be used by health workers, care takers, and individuals with respiratory symptoms, such as fever and cough.
2. Before touching the mask, clean hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water
3. Take the mask and inspect it for tears or holes.
4. Orient which side is the top side (where the metal strip is).
5. Ensure the proper side of the mask faces outwards (the coloured side).
6. Place the mask to your face. Pinch the metal strip or stiff edge of the mask so it moulds to the shape of your nose.
7. Pull down the mask's bottom so it covers your mouth and your chin.
8. After use, take off the mask; remove the elastic loops from behind the ears while keeping the mask away from your face and clothes, to avoid touching potentially contaminated surfaces of the mask.
9. Discard the mask in a closed bin immediately after use.
10. Perform hand hygiene after touching or discarding the mask – Use alcohol-based hand rub or, if visibly soiled, wash your hands with soap and water.

Q.16 How much is the incubation period for COVID 19?

The “incubation period” means the time between catching the virus and beginning to have symptoms of the disease. Most estimates of the incubation period for COVID-19 range from 1-14 days, most commonly around five days. These estimates will be updated as more data become available.

Q.17 Can humans get infected from animals?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in animals. Occasionally, people get infected with these viruses which may then spread to other people. For example, SARS-CoV was associated with civet cats and MERS-CoV is transmitted by dromedary camels. Possible animal sources of COVID-19 have not yet been confirmed.

To protect yourself, such as when visiting live animal markets, avoid direct contact with animals and surfaces in contact with animals. Ensure good food safety practices at all times. Handle raw meat, milk or animal organs with care to avoid contamination of uncooked foods and avoid consuming raw or undercooked animal products.

Q.18 Can I catch COVID 19 from my pet?

- We are aware of instances of animals and pets of COVID-19 patients being infected with the disease;
- As the intergovernmental body responsible for improving animal health worldwide, the [World Organisation for Animal Health](#) (OIE) has been developing technical guidance on specialized topics related to animal health, dedicated to veterinary services and technical experts (including on testing and quarantine);
- There is a possibility for some animals to become infected through close contact with infected humans. Further evidence is needed to understand if animals and pets can spread the disease;
- Based on current evidence, human to human transmission remains the main driver;
- It is still too early to say whether cats could be the intermediate host in the transmission of the COVID-19.

Q.19 How long does the virus survive on surfaces?

It is not certain how long the virus that causes COVID-19 survives on surfaces, but it seems to behave like other coronaviruses. Studies suggest that coronaviruses (including preliminary information on the COVID-19 virus) may persist on surfaces for a few hours or up to several days. This may vary under different conditions (e.g. type of surface, temperature or humidity of the environment).

Q.20 How do you clean the surfaces?

If you think a surface may be infected, clean it with simple disinfectant to kill the virus and protect yourself and others. Clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water. Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, or nose.

Q.21 Is it safe to receive a package from any area where COVID 19 has been reported?

Yes. The likelihood of an infected person contaminating commercial goods is low and the risk of catching the virus that causes COVID-19 from a package that has been moved, travelled, and exposed to different conditions and temperature is also low.

Until the source of this virus is identified and controlled, there is a risk of reintroduction of the virus in the human population and the risk of new outbreaks like the ones we are currently experiencing.

Q.22 What will I do if I have symptoms of COVID 19?

If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and call in advance. Wear a mask or cover your face if you have symptoms and when you travel to the health facility. Follow the directions of your local health authority.

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