ABOUT

2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The recent outbreak of disease caused by the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19), and its spread to other countries throughout Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and North America has made major headlines.

If you are traveling to a destination where the COVID-19 is present, please read the information detailed below to give you a better understanding of the virus itself and the illness it has been causing.

OVERVIEW

- COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a novel (new) coronavirus that can be spread from person to person.
- Older adults and people with underlying health conditions may be at increased risk for severe disease.
- There is no vaccine; travelers are advised to prevent infection by practicing good hygiene and avoiding contact with sick people, livestock or wildlife, and wet markets.
- Patients with confirmed COVID-19 infection have reportedly had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of fever, cough, and shortness of breath; symptoms may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure.
- Confirmed cases have now been reported in more than 75 countries including US, with China, Italy, Iran, Japan, Singapore & South Korea being the most affected.
- Hundreds of cases have been confirmed across the United States, with reports of human-to-human transmission confirmed in several states.

ABOUT

WHAT IS A CORONAVIRUS?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses found in both animals and humans. Some infect people and are known to cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

WHAT IS A NOVEL CORONAVIRUS?

A novel coronavirus is a new coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans. The new, or “novel” coronavirus, now called COVID-19, had not previously been detected before the outbreak was reported in Wuhan, China in December 2019.

WHAT IS 2019 NOVEL CORONAVIRUS?

COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus. The virus causing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), is not that same as the coronaviruses that commonly circulate among humans and cause mild illness, like the common cold. 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. COVID-19 is from the same family of viruses as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV) but it is not the same virus.

This new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. An outbreak of pneumonia of unknown etiology in Wuhan City, China was initially reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) on December 31, 2019. Chinese health authorities have confirmed more than 40 infections with a novel coronavirus as the cause of the outbreak. Reportedly, most patients had epidemiological links to a large seafood and animal market. The market was closed on January 1, 2020.

Early on, many of the patients in the COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan, China had some link to a large seafood and live animal market, suggesting animal-to-person spread. Later, a growing number of patients reportedly did not have
exposure to animal markets, indicating person-to-person spread. Chinese officials report that sustained person-to-person spread in the community is occurring in China.

**WHY IS THE DISEASE CAUSING THE OUTBREAK NOW BEING CALLED CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19)?**

On February 11, 2020, the World Health Organization announced an official name for the disease that is causing the 2019 novel coronavirus outbreak, first identified in Wuhan China. The new name of this disease is coronavirus disease 2019, abbreviated as COVID-19. In COVID-19, ‘CO’ stands for ‘corona,’ ‘V’ for ‘virus,’ and ‘D’ for disease. Formerly, this disease was referred to as “2019 novel coronavirus” or “2019 nCoV.”

There are many types of human coronaviruses, including some that commonly cause mild upper-respiratory tract illnesses. COVID-19 is a new disease, caused by a novel (or new) coronavirus that has not previously been seen in humans. The name of this disease was selected following the World Health Organization’s (WHO) best practice for naming of new human infectious diseases.

**WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?**

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. Some people become infected but don’t develop any symptoms and don’t feel unwell. Most people (about 80%) recover from the disease without needing special treatment. Around 1 out of every 6 people who gets COVID-19 becomes seriously ill and develops difficulty breathing. 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.

**WHAT TREATMENT IS AVAILABLE?**

There is no specific antiviral treatment recommended for COVID-19, nor is there a vaccine. People infected with COVID-19 should receive supportive care to help relieve symptoms. For severe cases, treatment should include care to support vital organ functions. People who think they may have been exposed to COVID-19 should contact their healthcare provider immediately. Some specific treatments are under investigation and will be tested through clinical trials. The WHO is helping to coordinate efforts to develop medicines to treat COVID-19 with a range of partners.

**WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ILLNESS CAUSED BY COVID-19, THE FLU OR A COLD?**

People with COVID-19 infection, the flu, or a cold typically develop respiratory symptoms such as fever, cough and runny nose. Even though many symptoms are alike, they are caused by different viruses. Because of their similarities, it can be difficult to identify the disease based on symptoms alone. That’s why laboratory tests are required to confirm if someone has COVID-19.

As always, the WHO recommends that people who have cough, fever and difficulty breathing should seek medical care early. Patients should inform health care providers if they have travelled in the 14 days before they developed symptoms, or if they have been in close contact with someone with who has been sick with respiratory symptoms.

**TRANSMISSION**

**HOW DOES COVID-19 SPREAD?**

Current understanding about how the virus that causes coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) spreads is largely based on what is known about similar coronaviruses.

- **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) via 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.
• 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.

WHEN DOES SPREAD HAPPEN?
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 3 feet away from a person who is sick.

It is important that everyone practice good respiratory hygiene. For example, sneeze or cough into a flexed elbow, or use a tissue and discard it immediately into a closed bin. It is also very important for people to wash their hands regularly with either alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.

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 with this new coronavirus, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. WHO is assessing ongoing research on the ways COVID-19 is spread and will continue to share updated findings.

HOW EFFICIENTLY DOES THE VIRUS SPREAD?
How easily a virus spreads from person-to-person can vary. Some viruses are highly contagious (like measles), while other viruses are less so. Another factor is whether the spread continues over multiple generations of people (if spread is sustained).

WHAT IS THE RISK OF HUMAN TO HUMAN TRANSMISSION?
COVID-19 causes respiratory disease and can be transmitted from person to person, usually after close contact with an infected patient, for example, in a household workplace, or health care center. Person-to-person spread has been reported within and outside China, including in the United States and other countries.

Outbreaks of novel virus infections among people are always of public health concern. The risk from these outbreaks depends on the characteristics of the virus, including whether and how well it spreads between people, the severity of resulting illness, and the medical or other measures available to control the impact of the virus (for example, vaccine or treatment medications).

Investigations are ongoing, and person-to-person spread of COVID-19 is occurring. 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.

CAN SOMEONE WHO HAS HAD COVID-19 SPREAD THE ILLNESS TO OTHERS?
The virus that causes COVID-19 is spreading from person-to-person. Someone who is actively sick with COVID-19 can spread the illness to others. That is why 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 doctors, 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.

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).

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.

**CAN COVID-19 BE CAUGHT FROM A PERSON WHO PRESENTS 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. WHO is assessing ongoing research on the period of transmission of COVID-19 and will continue to share updated findings.
DISCLAIMER

All information contained in this document was sourced from the World Health Organization or US Center of Disease Control website and was accurate at the time of publication. As this is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation, the CDC and WHO websites linked below are the best sources for the most up-to-date information and guidance.

RESOURCES

US CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL & PREVENTION

On this website you can find information and guidance from the CDC regarding the current outbreak of novel coronavirus (COVID-19); please visit this page for daily updates.

FURTHER INFORMATION & RESOURCES
- What You Need to Know About COVID-19
- About COVID-19
- News
- Information for Travelers
- Risk Assessment
- Cases: United States, Global

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019

On this website you can find information and guidance from the WHO regarding the current outbreak of novel coronavirus (COVID-19); please visit this page for daily updates.

FURTHER INFORMATION & RESOURCES
- Protect Yourself
- Questions & Answers
- Myth-Busters
- Travel Advice
- Situation Reports