Coronavirus (COVID-19): The CDC Basics

What is the novel coronavirus?
A novel coronavirus is a 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 circulate among humans and cause mild illness, like the common cold.

How does the virus spread?
The virus that causes COVID-19 seems to be spreading easily in the community in some 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.

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.

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

What are the symptoms?
Current reported symptoms have included mild to severe respiratory illness with fever, cough, and difficulty breathing, although the clinical spectrum ranges from mild disease with non-specific signs and symptoms of acute respiratory illness to severe pneumonia with respiratory failure and septic shock. There have also been reports of asymptomatic infection with COVID-19.

How should healthcare personnel protect themselves when evaluating a patient who may have COVID-19?
Although the transmission dynamics have yet to be determined, CDC currently recommends a cautious approach to persons under investigation (PUI) for COVID-19. Healthcare personnel evaluating PUI or providing care for patients with confirmed COVID-19 should use Standard Precautions, Contact Precautions, Airborne Precautions, and use eye protection (e.g., goggles or a face shield).

What can I do to reduce the chance of contracting COVID-19?
- 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.
• **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.

**What do I do if I think I have COVID-19?**

• **If you are a close contact of someone with COVID-19 and develop symptoms of COVID-19,** call your healthcare provider and tell them about your symptoms and your exposure.

• **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](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance.html). People who are mildly ill with COVID-19 are able to isolate at home during their illness.

• **If you have been in China or another affected area or have been exposed to someone sick with COVID-19 in the last 14 days,** you will face some limitations on your movement and activity for up to 14 days. Please follow instructions during this time. Your cooperation is integral to the ongoing public health response to try to slow spread of this virus.

**Where do I go for more information on COVID-19?**
Keep consistent and up to date by checking the CDC website.
For more information for healthcare personnel, visit:

For a broader set of Q+A for healthcare professionals, visit this CDC Link: