

2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

What is COVID-19?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Some coronaviruses can cause illness in people and others can cause illness in animals. Rarely, animal coronaviruses can infect people, and more rarely, these can then spread from person-to-person through close contact. Recently, a novel (new) coronavirus emerged in Wuhan, China which is called the 2019 Novel Coronavirus or COVID-19.

Transmission/Spread

COVID-19 spreads through the direct contact with the respiratory droplets of someone who is infected with the virus through their cough or sneeze. These droplets can spread up to 2 metres, or 6 feet. It may also be possible for a person to 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.

Signs and Symptoms

In general, human coronaviruses commonly cause mild but occasionally more severe respiratory infections. It is estimated that they cause about 15% of common colds. Coronaviruses can also cause more severe illness, such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS).

Some of the symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Muscle aches and tiredness
- Difficulty breathing
- Less commonly: sore throat, headache and diarrhea have been reported

Older patients and those with chronic medical conditions may be at higher risk for severe illness.

Testing

The priority of the healthcare system is being able to test those most in need. Not everyone requires testing.

Treatment

There is no specific antiviral treatment for COVID-19. People ill with COVID-19 should receive supportive care to help relieve symptoms. People with more severe illness may require hospitalization.

Prevention

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to this virus. Prevention measures include:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- Avoid close contact with people who are ill
- Stay home when you are ill
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then immediately throw the tissue in the garbage and clean your hands
- If you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your sleeve or arm
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a household cleaner
- The Government of Canada recommends Canadians avoid all non-essential travel outside of Canada until further notice

Advice for people who have recently travelled outside of Canada

For up-to-date information please check the Public Health Agency of Canada – Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Travel advice (<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/latest-travel-health-advice.html>)

Self-isolation

Persons diagnosed with COVID-19, persons suspected of having COVID-19, and returning travelers from outside Canada should self-isolate.

- **Stay home** and avoid close contact with others, including those in their home.
- Specifically, **do not** attend child care, school or work.
- **Avoid** public spaces, contact with others, taking public transit; and refrain from having visitors.

More information

- City of Toronto. Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19): <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/health-wellness-care/diseases-medications-vaccines/coronavirus/>
- Public Health Agency of Canada. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html>