

# Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)



## What is novel coronavirus?

SARS-CoV-2 is a novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19, a respiratory illness. The virus is currently spreading from person-to-person. Health experts are concerned because this new virus has the potential to cause severe illness and pneumonia in some people — especially people over age 60 or who have weakened immune systems.

## How does COVID-19 spread?

Health experts are still learning how the virus is transmitted. Currently it is thought to spread:

- through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes
- between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet)
- by touching a surface or object with the virus and then touching the mouth, nose, or eyes

## How severe is COVID-19?

Most coronavirus illnesses are mild with fever and cough. The vast majority of people with novel coronavirus infection do not require hospital care. A much smaller percentage of people get severely ill with lung and breathing problems like pneumonia. Elderly people and people with underlying medical conditions are at highest risk for severe disease.

## What are the symptoms?

People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. People with these symptoms or combinations of symptoms may have COVID-19: Cough, Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing. Or at least two of these symptoms: Fever, Chills, Repeated shaking with chills, Muscle pain, Headache, Sore throat, New loss of taste or smell. This list is not all inclusive. Please consult your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning to you.

## When do I seek medical evaluation and advice?

If you have COVID-19-like symptoms, contact your doctor first. Do not go to the emergency room. Emergency rooms need to be able to serve those with the most critical needs. If you have difficulty breathing, it doesn't mean you have novel coronavirus, but you should call 911.

If you're over 60 and you have underlying conditions like diabetes, heart disease, and lung disease, come up with a plan with your doctor to identify your health risks for coronavirus and how to manage symptoms. Contact your doctor right away if you do have symptoms.

If you have symptoms and you were exposed to someone confirmed to have the virus, call your health care provider.

## How can I protect myself from COVID-19?

It's important that everyone take steps to reduce the spread of novel coronavirus, especially to protect those who are more vulnerable. Steps you can take to prevent spread of flu and the common cold will also help prevent coronavirus:

- wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If not available, use hand sanitizer. See <https://youtu.be/d914EnpU4Fo> for a quick review of proper handwashing techniques.
- avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands
- avoid contact with people who are sick especially if you are 60 or over or have an underlying health condition, like heart disease, diabetes, lung disease or a weakened immune system.
- stay home while you are sick and stay at least 6 feet away from others.
- cover your mouth/nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing
- wear a cloth mask which covers your mouth and nose, when outside your home.

If you are traveling overseas, check for the latest COVID-19 Travel Alerts and follow the CDC's Travelers' Health guidance.

Currently, there are no vaccines available to prevent COVID-19 infections.

## How is COVID-19 treated?

There are no medications specifically approved for COVID-19. Most people with mild COVID-19 illness will recover on their own by drinking plenty of fluids, resting, and taking pain and fever medications. However, some cases develop pneumonia and require medical care or hospitalization.

## Can you get re-infected with COVID-19?

It is currently unknown how long COVID-19 immunity lasts after the initial infection with disease. It may be possible to become infected with COVID-19 twice.

## Where can I get tested?

Your physician's office is a great place to seek a test. In some instances, the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services and/or its partners do offer testing. Testing is typically conducted by taking a swab from the nose. Call ahead before visiting your healthcare provider or one of the sites listed here to determine testing eligibility.

**For more information: [www.health.mo.gov/coronavirus](http://www.health.mo.gov/coronavirus)**

**24 hour Hotline: 877-435-8411**

**Updated 5/25/2020**

