

2019 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions*

*Information is current as of 3/5/2020 and is subject to change

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Key Points

- This virus can spread from person-to-person. It can cause severe disease and death.
- Right now, most Americans are at low risk.
- Currently, the greatest risk for COVID-19 is still travel to [an affected area](#) (an area with sustained community transmission) and/or close contact with a confirmed case.
- Contact with individuals of Chinese/Asian descent and Chinese food/restaurants are not risk factors for COVID-19.

Background

What is 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)?

- The 2019 Novel Coronavirus, or COVID-19, is a new respiratory virus first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China.
- Learn more about [2019 Novel Coronavirus](#).

What is a novel coronavirus?

- A novel coronavirus (nCoV) is a new coronavirus not previously identified.
- COVID-19 is not the same as the coronaviruses that commonly circulate among humans and cause mild illness, like the common cold.

What is the source of COVID-19 (where did it come from)?

- Public health officials and partners are working to identify the source of the COVID-19.
- Early on, many of the patients in the COVID-19 outbreak had some link to a large seafood and live animal market, suggesting animal-to-person spread.

How does the virus spread?

- Much is unknown about how COVID-19 spreads. Current knowledge is largely based on what is known about other coronaviruses.
- The virus probably originated from an animal source and is now capable of person-to-person spread. Person-to-person spread is thought to occur when an infected person coughs or sneezes within 6 feet of an uninfected person and the uninfected person breathes in the virus.
- It is currently unclear how easily this virus is spread between people.

Is COVID-19 the same as the MERS-CoV or SARS virus?

- No. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses and COVID-19 is not the same as the coronaviruses that cause Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) or Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).
- The virus that causes COVID-19 is similar to the virus that causes SARS.

What is community spread?

- 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.

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Prevention

How can I protect myself?

- The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to this virus. People should [avoid travel to affected areas](#) and follow general respiratory prevention measures:
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. This is especially important after using the bathroom, before eating, and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water is not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
 - Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
 - Cover your cough or sneeze into a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
 - Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
 - Stay home when you are sick.

Should I wear a mask to protect myself from COVID-19? What about while flying?

- No, unless you are sick. U.S. CDC does not recommend the use of face masks for healthy individuals to prevent COVID-19.
- Surgical masks are meant to protect sick individuals from infecting others.
- You should only wear a mask if a healthcare professional recommends it.
- The best way to prevent infection with COVID-19 is to avoid exposure to the virus. Practice [general respiratory prevention measures](#).

I cannot find facemasks anywhere. How can I find facemasks?

- If you are from a healthcare facility and are looking for facemasks, please contact your healthcare coalition for assistance.
- If you are a member of the public who is not ill, there are no recommendations for you to wear a facemask at this time. Facemasks are only recommended for ill individuals. Practice [general respiratory prevention measures](#) to protect yourself.
- If you are a member of the public and are feeling sick, contact your healthcare provider for assistance in finding facemasks.

Are there any cleaning recommendations to prevent COVID-19?

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces (tables, countertops, light switches, doorknobs, cabinet handles, etc.) using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Consult [this list](#) of EPA-approved products for emerging viral pathogens for recommendations.
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.

What type of hand sanitizer should I be using?

- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains 60 percent to 95 percent alcohol.
- If soap and water are readily available, wash hands instead of using alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

What is social distancing?

- Social distancing means remaining out of:
 - Public places where close contact with others may occur (shopping centers, movie theaters, stadiums, etc.).
 - Workplaces (unless in an office space that allows distancing from others).
 - Schools and other classroom settings.
 - Local public transportation (bus, subway, taxi, ride share, plane, ship, etc.).

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Medical Information & Testing

What are the signs and symptoms of COVID-19?

- Signs and symptoms include:
 - Fever
 - Cough
 - Difficulty Breathing/Shortness of Breath
- Signs and symptoms range from little to no symptoms to severe illness and even death.

Symptoms are very similar to seasonal influenza, which is circulating in Maine.

I think I should be tested for COVID-19. How can I do that?

- If you develop a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness, like cough and shortness of breath, you should call your healthcare provider and Maine CDC. Mention any recent travel or contact with a confirmed case.
- Your healthcare provider will work with Maine CDC to coordinate testing.

How do healthcare facilities test people for COVID-19?

- Healthcare facilities should immediately call Maine CDC at 1-800-821-5821 if they want to request testing.
- Maine CDC will work with the healthcare facility to coordinate testing.

What are the guidelines for testing/Who should get tested?

- Healthcare facilities should immediately call Maine CDC at 1-800-821-5821 if they identify someone they think meets the criteria.
- Patients in the United States should receive testing based on the following criteria:
 - Local epidemiology of COVID-19.
 - Clinical course of illness (most COVID-19 patients have developed fever and/or symptoms of acute respiratory illness – cough, difficulty breathing).
 - History of close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 patient within 14 days of symptom onset or history of travel to [affected area](#) within 14 days of symptom onset.
- Testing for other causes of respiratory illness, including infections such as influenza, is strongly encouraged.

Can a person test negative and later test positive for COVID-19?

- For COVID-19, a negative test result for a sample collected while a person has symptoms likely means that the COVID-19 virus is not causing the current illness.

Where are the persons under investigation (PUIs or suspect cases) located? I am worried that they live near me.

- In order to protect privacy, we cannot share case information with the public.
- Maine CDC will update the [coronavirus website](#) regularly with information about positive COVID-19 cases in Maine.

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Public Health Response and Current Situation

Am I at risk for COVID-19 infection in the United States?

- Generally low risk:
 - For most of the American public, who are unlikely to be exposed to the virus at this time, the immediate health risk from COVID-19 is considered low.
 - People in communities where ongoing community spread with the virus that causes COVID-19 has been reported are at elevated, though still relatively low, risk of exposure.
- Elevated risk:
 - Healthcare workers and close contacts caring for confirmed COVID-19 patients are at elevated risk of exposure.
 - Travelers returning from [affected international locations](#) where community spread is occurring are also at elevated risk of exposure.
- The situation is rapidly evolving. For the most up-to-date travel information, visit [U.S. CDC's travel health notices page](#).

Am I at risk for COVID-19 from a package or products shipping from China?

- Currently there is no evidence to support the spread of COVID-19 with imported goods. There are no cases of COVID-19 associated with imported goods.

Which states have confirmed cases of COVID-19?

- U.S. CDC has a [map of states with confirmed COVID-19 cases](#). This map is updated regularly.

Which countries have confirmed cases?

- U.S. CDC has a [world map and list of countries with confirmed cases](#). This map is updated regularly.

Can someone who has been quarantined for COVID-19 spread the illness to others?

- No, someone who has been released from COVID-19 quarantine is not considered a risk to others because they have not become ill during the incubation period.
- For COVID-19, the quarantine period is 14 days from the last date of exposure, since that is the longest incubation period seen for similar coronaviruses.

I'm pregnant. Am I at high risk for developing COVID-19?

- Pregnant women experience changes which might make them more susceptible to respiratory infections, but data about pregnant women and COVID-19 is not available at this time.
- Pregnant women may be at risk for severe illness compared to the general population. This is based on observations from other related coronavirus infections (SARS and MERS) and other viral respiratory infections (influenza) during pregnancy.
- Pregnant women should use [general preventive measures to avoid respiratory illness](#).

Can pregnant women with COVID-19 pass the virus to their fetus or newborn (i.e. vertical transmission)?

- The COVID-19 virus is thought to spread mainly by close contact with an infected person through respiratory droplets.
- It is still unknown if a pregnant woman can spread the COVID-19 virus to her fetus or infant through vertical transmission (before, during, or after delivery), but in the limited case reports that are available, no infants have tested positive for the COVID-19 virus after birth.
- After birth, infants are at risk of person-to-person transmission through close contact.
- Vertical transmission has not been reported for other coronaviruses (SARS and MERS coronaviruses).

Should I breastfeed if I have COVID-19?

- It is unknown if mothers with COVID-19 can spread the virus to infants through breast milk.
- Limited studies to date on women with COVID-19 and SARS have not detected virus in breast milk.
- If continued breastfeeding/feeding of expressed breastmilk is determined by the mother in coordination with a healthcare provider, the mother should take precautions to avoid spreading virus to her infant. This includes:
 - Wash hands before touching the infant, pumps, or bottle parts.
 - Properly clean pump and bottle after each use.
 - Wear a face mask when touching the infant.
 - Have someone who is well feed expressed breastmilk to the infant.

Is my child at increased risk of developing COVID-19?

- There is currently no evidence that children are more susceptible to COVID-19 infection than the general population.

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Travel

Is it safe to travel to countries where there are cases of COVID-19?

- U.S. State Department Level 4 – Do not travel:
 - The U.S. State Department has issued a Level 4 – Do Not Travel alert for: China, the Lombardy and Veneto regions of Italy, and Daegu, South Korea.
 - Entry of foreign nationals from China and Iran has been suspended.
- U.S. CDC Level 3 - Avoid all nonessential travel:
 - U.S. CDC recommends that travelers avoid all nonessential travel to: China (not including Hong Kong, Macau, or Taiwan), Iran, South Korea, and Italy.
- U.S. CDC Level 2 – Older adults or those with chronic medical conditions consider postponing travel to: Japan
- All travelers should follow [general respiratory prevention measures](#) and visit [U.S. CDC's travelers health page](#).
- The situation is rapidly evolving. For the most up-to-date travel information, visit [U.S. CDC's travel health notices page](#).

Is it safe to travel to areas in the United States that have cases of COVID-19?

- Yes, there are no travel restrictions within the United States due to COVID-19.
- Most people are unlikely to be exposed to this virus, so the immediate health risk for COVID-19 to the average American is low.
- The situation is rapidly evolving. For the most up-to-date travel information, visit [U.S. CDC's travel health notices page](#).

I have a connection at an airport in [an affected country](#). Is that okay?

- Layovers at airports in destinations with [U.S. CDC level 3 travel notices](#) are included in the recommendation to avoid nonessential travel.
- If a layover or connection is unavoidable, it is recommended that travelers not leave the airport. Travelers with layovers may still be subject to screening and monitoring when entering the U.S.
- All travelers should follow [general respiratory prevention measures](#) and visit [U.S. CDC's travelers health page](#).

Am I at risk of getting COVID-19 on an airplane?

- Most viruses and other germs do not spread easily on airplanes because of how air circulates and is filtered.
- Although risk of infection on an airplane is low, travelers should practice [general respiratory prevention measures](#).

Is it safe to go on a cruise?

- Cruises put large numbers of people from many places in frequent and close contact with each other. This can promote the spread of respiratory viruses, including the virus that causes COVID-19.
- If you go on a cruise, practice these measures:
 - Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
 - Wash your hands with soap and water immediately after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
 - Stay in your cabin when you are sick and let the onboard medical center know immediately if you develop a fever (100.4°F/38°C or higher), begin to feel feverish, or have other symptoms (such as cough, runny nose, shortness of breath, or sore throat).

How are travelers being screened when they enter the U.S.?

- At this time, people who have been to China or Iran in the last 14 days are being screened.
- American citizens, lawful permanent residents, and family members who have been in China or Iran in the past 14 days will be allowed to enter the U.S. after screening. They will participate in monitoring by health officials until 14 days after they left China or Iran.
 - Travelers with signs and symptoms of illness (fever, cough, difficulty breathing) will need additional health assessment.
 - Movement restrictions for travelers who have been in China or Iran in the past 14 days will depend on their health and travel history.
- Foreign nationals who have been in China or Iran in the past 14 days will not be allowed entry into the U.S.

I (or someone I know) recently [traveled to an affected area](#) and do not feel sick. What should I do?

- If you have traveled to a country with widespread or ongoing community spread ([CDC Level 3 Travel Health Notice](#)), you should stay home for a period of 14 days from the time you left the affected area and practice social distancing.
- Take these steps to monitor your health:
 - Take your temperature with a thermometer two times a day and monitor for fever. Also watch for cough or trouble breathing.
 - Stay home and avoid contact with others. Do not go to work or school for this 14-day period. Discuss your work situation with your employer before returning to work.
 - Do not take public transportation, taxis, or ride-shares during the time you are practicing social distancing.
 - Avoid crowded places (such as shopping centers and movie theaters) and limit your activities in public.
 - Keep your distance from others (about 6 feet or 2 meters).
- All other travelers returning from countries without a CDC Level 3 Travel Health Notice should self-monitor for symptoms for 14 days after leaving the affected country.
 - Unless experiencing symptoms, you can return to your normal activities.

I (or someone I know) recently [traveled to an affected area](#) and am now sick. What should I do?

- If you recently traveled to a country with a COVID-19 outbreak and feel sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing within 14 days after you left, you should:
 - Isolate at home if the symptoms are mild until 24 hours after symptoms resolve.
 - Seek medical care. Tell your healthcare provider of your recent travel and symptoms BEFORE showing up to the office.
 - Avoid contact with others.
 - Avoid travel on public transportation.
 - Avoid non-essential travel while sick.
 - Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.
 - Wash your hands with soap and water immediately after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- If you need to seek medical care for other reasons, such as dialysis, call ahead to your healthcare provider and tell them about your recent travel to an area with ongoing community spread of COVID-19.

I recently traveled to an unaffected area and am now sick. What should I do?

- Contact a healthcare provider. Your healthcare provider may test you for influenza or other respiratory illnesses.
- Avoid contact with others.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing. Wash your hands with soap and water immediately after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid non-essential travel while sick.

My child's school has international students or students traveling back from [an affected country](#). Should I be concerned? What about students traveling back from unaffected countries?

- International students and other students traveling from unaffected countries do not pose a risk of COVID-19.
- Students traveling back from affected countries should follow [guidance from U.S. CDC for travelers returning to the U.S.](#)
- If symptoms develop (fever, cough, difficulty breathing), students should contact their healthcare provider by phone. Tell them of recent symptoms and recent travel BEFORE showing up to the office. Students should also follow [these recommendations](#).
- Always practice [general respiratory prevention measures](#).

I have friends/family/coworkers traveling from [an affected country](#) that I am going to be exposed to. Am I at risk for coronavirus?

- If your friend/family member/coworker is returning from an affected country, they should monitor themselves for symptoms (fever, cough, difficulty breathing) for 14 days after leaving the country and avoid contact with others.
Always practice [general respiratory prevention measures](#). Anyone with respiratory symptoms should contact a healthcare provider.

I have friends/family/coworkers traveling from unaffected countries that I am going to be exposed to. Am I at risk for coronavirus?

- If your friend/family member/coworker is returning from a country without sustained community transmission, you are not at increased risk of COVID-19.
- Always practice [general respiratory prevention measures](#). Anyone with respiratory symptoms should contact a healthcare provider.

I am picking someone up from an airport that is coming back from an affected country. What do I need to do?

- Always practice [general respiratory prevention measures](#).
- If the individual is symptomatic, they should be masked and taken to a healthcare provider right away. Make sure to call the healthcare provider's office before you get there.

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COVID-19 and Animals

Can I get COVID-19 from a pet or other animal? Can my pet get COVID-19?

- To date, CDC has not received any reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19. At this time, there is no evidence that pets, including dogs, can spread COVID-19.
- There is no reason to think that any animals, including pets, in the United States might be a source of infection with this new coronavirus. However, it is important to include pets in your family's preparedness planning efforts including having a 2-week supply of pet food and pet medicines available.
 - *For more information on preparing for your pet, please visit [U.S. CDC's Pet Disaster Preparedness Kit](#) site.*
- This is an evolving situation, and we will continue to provide updates as new information becomes available.
- Since other infectious diseases can spread between animals and people, it's always a good idea to wash your hands after being around animals or handling animals, their food, or supplies.
- For more information on the many benefits of pet ownership, as well as staying safe and healthy around animals including pets, livestock, and wildlife, visit [CDC's Healthy Pets, Healthy People website](#).

Should I avoid contact with pets or other animals if I am sick with COVID-19?

- Yes, you should restrict contact with pets or other animals while you are sick with COVID-19.
- If possible, have another member of your household care for animals while you are sick. If you must care for animals while sick, wash your hands before and after interacting with animals and wear a facemask.
- Avoid contact with animals, including petting, snuggling, being kissed or licked, and sharing food.
- There have been no reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19, but U.S. CDC recommends limiting contact with animals until more is known about the virus.

Should I be worried about animal products imported from affected countries?

- Animal products that enter the United States are regulated by U.S. CDC, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). Currently, there is no evidence to suggest that animal products imported from affected areas pose a risk for spreading COVID-19 in the U.S. This is a rapidly evolving situation and information will be updated as it becomes available.

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