How is COVID-19 spread?

COVID-19 can spread a few different ways:

- **Person to person transmission:** COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly from person to person between people who are in close contact with one another. The virus can spread through droplets released in the air when a person infected with the virus coughs, sneezes, or talks. In general, the more closely a person interacts with others and the longer that interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread.

- **Airborne transmission:** COVID-19 can sometimes be spread through small droplets and particles that remain in the air, in an area with poor air flow. This is called airborne transmission. This type of transmission can happen even if the infected person is more than six feet away, or has just left the room.

- **Contact with contaminated surfaces:** It’s also possible for a person to get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it, and then touching their mouth, nose, or eyes.


What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

COVID-19 can cause a range of disease symptoms, from mild to severe. These symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus, and can include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue (feeling extremely tired)
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Stuffy or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

This list does not include all possible symptoms. As we learn more about COVID-19, this list will be updated.


How can you reduce your risk of getting COVID-19?
Because there is no vaccine for COVID-19, it is important that we do all we can to prevent COVID-19 infection and transmission.

The following actions can prevent the spread of COVID-19:

- **Clean hands often:** Washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds is important, especially after a person has spent time in a public place or after blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing. People should also:
  - Avoid touching their faces—especially their eyes, nose, and mouth—with unwashed hands.
  - Wash their hands after touching surfaces that have not been recently disinfected.
  - Use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol when soap and water is not available.

- **Avoid close contact:** Individuals should avoid close contact with people who are sick, even inside the home. Because 2 in 5 people with COVID-19 do not show symptoms, it’s important to prevent exposure by physically distancing from others and maintaining at least six feet of space (about 2 arms’ length) between people when outside the home. When in the home, keep 6 feet between people who are sick and other household members. Keeping distance from others is especially important for people who are at higher risk of getting very sick.

- **Cover mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when around others:** All people should wear a cloth face cover in places where they are not able to practice social distancing (such as grocery stores and pharmacies). A cloth face cover is NOT a substitute for social distancing. Do not use a face cover meant for a healthcare worker.

- **Cover coughs and sneezes:** In situations where an individual does not have a cloth face cover, they should cover their mouth and nose with a tissue or use the inside of their elbow to cover coughs or sneezes. Used tissues should be thrown away and hands should be washed immediately.

- **Clean and disinfect:** Frequently touched surfaces including tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, phones, toilets, faucets, and sinks should be cleaned and disinfected daily.


**Does COVID-19 only affect older people, or are younger people also at risk?**

While anyone may be at risk for infection, certain populations are at higher risk for developing severe illness from COVID-19. These include:

- **Older adults:** Among adults, the risk for severe illness from COVID-19 increases with age, with older adults at highest risk.

- **People with underlying conditions:** People of any age with underlying conditions such as cancer, chronic kidney disease, chronic lung disease, heart conditions, obesity and severe obesity, sickle cell disease, smoking, and diabetes are at higher risk of severe illness. People whose immune systems do not work at full capacity (i.e., are immunocompromised) are also at higher risk.

While children have been less affected by COVID-19 compared to adults, children can be infected with the virus. Children who have certain medical conditions might be at higher risk for severe illness compared to other children. CDC and partners are researching Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C), a condition where different body parts become inflamed (i.e., red and swollen). While
MIS-C can be serious, most children who were diagnosed with this condition have gotten better with medical care.

Because people of all ages can be infected with COVID-19, all people should take steps to protect themselves by washing hands often, avoiding close contact when possible, covering coughs and sneezes, etc.

Sources: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/
https://www.cdc.gov/mis-c/

Why might someone blame or avoid individuals and groups (create stigma) because of COVID-19?

People may be worried for themselves, or for friends and relatives who are living in or visiting areas where COVID-19 is spreading. Fear and anxiety can lead to social stigma towards people who live in certain parts of the world, for example, or towards people who have traveled internationally, were in quarantine, or are healthcare professionals.

Stigma is discrimination against an identifiable group of people. Stigma is associated with a lack of knowledge about how COVID-19 spreads, a need to blame someone, fears about disease and death, and gossip that spreads rumors and myths.

Stigma hurts everyone by creating more fear or anger toward ordinary people instead of focusing on the disease that is causing the problem.


How can people help stop stigma related to COVID-19?

People can fight stigma by providing social support in situations where you notice it occurring. Stigma affects the emotional or mental health of stigmatized groups and the communities they live in. Stopping stigma is important to making communities and community members resilient. Everyone can help stop stigma related to COVID-19 by knowing the facts and sharing them with others in your community.


Are antibiotics effective in preventing and treating COVID-19?

No. Antibiotics do not work against viruses—they only work on bacterial infections. Because COVID-19 is caused by a virus, antibiotics do not prevent or treat it. Some patients with COVID-19 may also develop a bacterial infection. In that case, a healthcare professional may treat the bacterial infection with an antibiotic.


Can my pets get or spread COVID-19?

At this time, the risk of animal spreading COVID-19 to people is considered to be low.
However, since animals can spread other diseases to people, it’s always a good idea to practice healthy habits around pets and other animals, such as washing your hands and maintaining good hygiene.


**Can you get COVID-19 more than once, or do you get immunity after recovering from a case of COVID-19?**

We do not fully understand the body’s immune response to the COVID-19 virus. We don’t yet know if people who have had the virus can be re-infected shortly after they recover.