COVID-19: SIMPLE ANSWERS TO TOP QUESTIONS

RISK COMMUNICATION FIELD GUIDE

QUESTIONS AND KEY MESSAGES

NOTE – THE UNDERSTANDING OF COVID-19 IS RAPIDLY EVOLVING AND THIS DOCUMENT WILL BE UPDATED PERIODICALLY TO REFLECT NEW INFORMATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS AS THEY BECOME AVAILABLE.
I. INTRODUCTION

In February 2020, ASTHO sponsored the development of COVID-19: Simple Answers to Top Questions with risk communication experts and a working group of State Health Officials using the science-based, risk communication message mapping development process. “Message Maps” are risk communication tools used to help organize complex information and make it easier to express current knowledge. The development process distills information into clear and easily understood messages.

ASTHO’s COVID-19: Simple Answers to Top Questions is based on message maps and follows the belief that state health officials need both short and long answers. Messages are presented initially in no more than 3-5 short sentences and convey 3-5 key messages, ideally in the least number of words possible. The approach is based on surveys showing that lead or front-page media and broadcast stories usually convey only the soundbite: 3-5 messages usually in less than 9 seconds for broadcast media or 27 words for print. Each primary message normally has 3 to 5 supporting messages that can be used when and where appropriate to provide context for the issue being mapped. A brief description of the message mapping strategy is in the Appendices.

In the following pages, you will find 45+ top questions about COVID-19 answered with detailed message maps. ASTHO recommends that you review the Appendix “Media Interviews: Tips and Pitfalls” before you engage with the media.

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Contributions from the following people are acknowledged: Glen Nowak, Tom Hipper, Craig Manning, and Paula Hoelker-williams.
II. PREFACE

State and Territorial Health Officials (S/THOs) play a critical role in the health security of our nation. The demands are many and the margin of error is small. S/THOs must translate the best available public heath evidence and science into actionable policy advice for elected leaders and other cabinet agencies. They must act as a credible, timely, source of accurate information to variety of stakeholders. Equally important, the SHO and the public health team must convey a clear, compassionate, and caring message to the public to motivate appropriate protective behaviors without instilling inappropriate fear. All of this must occur while leading and managing complex public health agencies strained under the demands of an emergency response.

The role is all the more complex in a rapidly evolving situation in which many unknowns remain. Overconfidence or utilizing an inaccurate mental model of an issue can lead to missteps and diminish public trust. It is critical for this reason to be very cognizant of what is known, what is unknown, what is controllable, and what is not controllable. This humility allows rapid adjustments to strategies and tactics and allows an accurate and credible message to be delivered to and received by the public and policymakers.

ASTHO worked closely with Drs. Randall Hyer and Vincent Covello from the Center for Risk Communication/CrisisCommunciation.net to develop this communication guide to assist S/THOs in preparing to communicate with the public, media, and policymakers about COVID-19. Over 30 state and territorial health officials prioritized the current top 45+ questions on COVID-19 for which these message map style answers were developed. Of course, a S/THO’s judgment will determine the most appropriate response to an issue in his or her jurisdiction. It is our hope that this messaging guide can provide S/THOs with a baseline of consistent messages across our nation.

COVID-19: Simple Answers to Top Questions will be modified and updated as events evolve and more is known.

Thank you for your service of protecting and improving the health of our nation.

Michael Fraser, PhD, CAE
Chief Executive Officer
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
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IV. COMMUNICATING WITH MESSAGE MAPS

This risk communication toolkit contains information about COVID-19. Answers to important questions are presented in a format called a “message map.” According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a message map is a science-based risk communication tool used to help organize complex information and make it easier for information to be shared.

A message map distills information into a series of layered messages, from basic to more complex. Messages — e.g., answers to questions — are presented initially in a few bullets that convey key messages, ideally using the least number of words possible.iii The key messages are then followed by additional information.

A key assumption of message mapping is people want clear answers to their questions about complex scientific issues as well as access to more detailed answers to those same questions.iv A second key assumption is if stakeholders — all those interested or impacted by the risk — are well-informed by the best and most up-to-date information about a complex scientific or technical issue, they are in a better position to engage, exchange information, and participate constructively in the decision-making process.

Unfortunately, many scientists face challenges in sharing complex scientific information. These challenges are addressed in part by message maps. First, scientists must overcome a basic obstacle to effective communication: people facing a perceived threat and under stress typically have difficulty processing information — hearing, understanding, and remembering. Second, as shown in Figure 2 on next page, scientists are used to communicating with their peers in a particular format, beginning with background information, moving to supporting details, and finally coming to their results and conclusions. For communicating with the public, however, a more effective approach is to invert that pyramid and begin with the conclusions — the bottom lines up front. The top line of a message map — the key messages — are the conclusions.

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iii See https://www.cdc.gov

iv For more information about message mapping, see the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: https://www.epa.gov
Third, scientists often fail to craft clear messages that can be easily understood and recalled by non-experts. Message maps are designed to start with clear messages and build complexity through hierarchical layers. Fourth, because of details and lack of hierarchical structure, non-experts often have difficulty sorting out what is important from what is less important. Fifth, scientists sometimes speak in a code known only to other scientists, using the technical jargon of their field instead of plain language. Many words that seem perfectly normal to scientists are incomprehensible jargon to a lay audience. Sixth, scientists often fail to put findings into the context of the larger body of knowledge of what is scientifically well understood. Seventh, scientists often lead with what they do not know instead of what they do know. Eighth, scientists often fail to anticipate common misunderstandings and misperceptions.

**Answering Questions with Message Maps**

Message maps can be used to answer important questions in the form of a short answer consisting of ideally 3 (no more than 5) key messages expressed in 27 words. A longer answer consists of the shorter answer with supporting details. Best practices are to complete the answer to a question with repeating the shorter answer or key messages, which provides a soundbite that is easy to quote and to remember.
V. MESSAGE MAPS: SHORTER AND LONGER ANSWERS

000. What are key facts about the global COVID-19 pandemic in the U.S.?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):
1. The U.S., states, and local communities are implementing strong public health measures to reduce the spread of the virus and the burden on the healthcare system.
2. Federal, state, and local authorities are slowing the spread of COVID-19 through social distancing.
3. Strong public health measures and basic hygiene help prevent COVID-19 infection and spread.

Longer Answer:
1. The U.S., states, and local communities are implementing strong public health measures to reduce the spread of the virus and the burden on the healthcare system.
   - Public health authorities are detecting, testing, treating, isolating, and finding contacts of those who have COVID-19.
   - Testing, identifying and isolating people infected with COVID-19 can reduce further spread.
   - Multiple countries have achieved promising results with strong public health measures.
   - Early tracing of COVID-19 contacts can significantly reduce spread.
   - People with contact with an COVID-19 infected person should self-quarantine and monitor themselves for symptoms.
   - Health care systems are strengthening training, protective equipment, and protocols for healthcare workers; expanding COVID-19 treatment facilities; targeting and expanding testing; and implementing best practices in risk and crisis communications.

2. Federal, state, and local authorities are slowing the spread of COVID-19 through social distancing.
   - People are thought to be highly contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest), but people without symptoms may also be contagious.
   - CDC recommends that people follow travel recommendations of federal, state, and local officials.
   - Social distancing guidelines, including sheltering-in-place, are intended to “flatten the curve”, i.e., slow the spread of COVID-19 so that fewer people seek treatment at any given time.

3. Strong public health measures and basic hygiene help prevent COVID-19 infection and spread.
   - Everyone should follow the orders of federal, state, and local officials to stay home if possible, maintain at least 3 - 6-feet of space from others, and avoid gatherings.
   - Wash your hands often; avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth; cover coughs and sneezes.
   - Clean frequently touched surfaces around the house with regular household cleaners.
   - Follow expert guidance and avoid dangerous unproven myths and rumors.

5 Available at: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html
# 100 Series: Basic Questions

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101. What are the signs/symptoms of COVID-19 and when do they appear?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):
1. Common COVID-19 symptoms include fever, cough, and shortness of breath.
2. Symptoms of COVID-19 may appear 2-14 days after exposure.
3. The disease is often much more severe in the elderly and people with predisposing conditions that make them more susceptible to illness.

Longer Answer:
1. **Common COVID-19 symptoms include fever, cough, and shortness of breath.**
   - Many people with COVID-19 have a mild to moderate upper respiratory tract infection similar to a cold.
   - Common symptoms include a cough, sore throat, headache, and fever.
   - Most people who test positive for COVID-19 commonly have had very mild or no symptoms.
   - Symptoms of COVID-19 in severe cases can lead to pneumonia or breathing difficulties, and can be fatal.
   - Older people and people with predisposing medical conditions, such as diabetes, asthma and heart disease, are more at risk for becoming severely ill from COVID-19.

2. **Symptoms of COVID-19 may appear 2-14 days after exposure.**
   - The time between when a person is exposed to an infectious agent (like the virus that causes COVID-19) and when symptoms appear is called the incubation period.
   - The current incubation period of COVID-19 is based on what is being learned from infections taking place across the U.S. and the world.
   - The average incubation period is about 5 days and COVID-19 symptoms often start as mild and gradually get worse over a few days.
   - Our understanding of the incubation period of COVID-19 is changing as data become available.

3. **The disease is often much more severe in elderly and people with health conditions that make them more susceptible to illness.**
   - The fatality rate for COVID-19 varies depending upon a person’s existing health conditions, age, gender, and access to care.
   - More is being learned about how many people have severe illness or die from COVID-19 as new cases and data are being reported.
   - Estimates of the overall fatality rate for COVID-19 currently vary, and range from under 1% to just over 3%.
   - COVID-19 illness is more severe for people over 60 years old and those with an existing health condition like diabetes, asthma, or heart disease.
   - COVID-19 illness may be more severe in places where health resources are limited or overburdened by the outbreak.

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8 Please see [Coronavirus Symptoms and Diagnosis (CDC)](https://www.cdc.gov)  
9 Please see [What to do if you are sick with 2019 Novel Coronavirus (CDC)](https://www.cdc.gov)
102. Does COVID-19 affect children and adults differently?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):

1. Older adults and people with underlying health conditions are at greatest risk.
2. Youth appears to offer some protection from severe COVID-19 illness.
3. All age groups can help slow spread of COVID-19.

Longer Answer:

1. **Older adults and people with underlying health conditions are at greatest risk.**
   - The World Health Organization mission to China found that nearly 80% of COVID-19 related deaths occurred in adults 60 years or older.
   - CDC found that 80% of COVID-19 deaths were among adults more than 65 years old, with the highest percentage among people more than 85 years old.
   - The Chinese Centers for Disease Control has reported that the fatality rate for people 80 or older is over 14%.
   - Higher COVID-19 cases and deaths among the elderly appears to be linked to presence of other diseases, a weaker immune system, poor overall health, or weakness of the respiratory system.

2. **Youth appears to offer some protection from severe COVID-19 illness.**
   - While some children and infants have been sick with COVID-19, adults make up most of the known cases to date.
   - Children age 10 and under currently account for just 1% of all COVID-19 cases.
     - Through mid-January 2020, no children in Wuhan, the epicenter of the Chinese outbreak, had contracted COVID-19.
   - Most of the children infected to date also appear to have milder symptoms compared to adults.
   - Young adults and teens are contracting COVID-19 but do not appear to be have severe illness.
   - Although less affected than older adults, teens and younger adults are at risk for COVID-19.
   - CDC found that 20% of hospitalized patients in the U.S. were between 20 and 44 years old.

3. **All age groups can help slow the spread of COVID-19.**
   - People should stay home as much as possible and follow guidelines to reduce the risk of being exposed.
   - Avoiding exposure slows the spread of the virus and reduces the strain on the healthcare system.
   - Avoiding infection includes cleaning hands often using soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer, covering coughs and sneezes, and following social distancing guidance.

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10 Please see Severe Outcomes Among Patients with COVID-19 (CDC)
11 Please see: SARS-CoV-2 Infection in Children (NEJM)
12 https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6912e2.htm
13 Please see Get Ready for COVID-19 (CDC)
103. What about pregnant women and COVID-19?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):

1. Initial studies indicate COVID-19 does not pass to a fetus during late pregnancy or cause severe health outcomes in a newborn.
2. Information regarding COVID-19 in pregnant women and the developing fetus is very limited.
3. As true for the general U.S. population, the risk for pregnant women to COVID-19 is relatively low.

Longer answer:

1. **Initial studies indicate COVID-19 does not pass to a fetus during late pregnancy or cause severe health outcomes in a newborn.**
   - An initial study also found that symptoms of COVID-19 in pregnant women were similar to those reported in non-pregnant women.
   - Initial findings are based on a small number of cases, over a short period of time, and only included women who were late in their pregnancy and gave birth by caesarean section.
   - The health effects of COVID-19 on mothers infected during the first or second trimester of pregnancy are currently unknown.

2. **Information regarding COVID-19 in pregnant women and the developing fetus is very limited.**
   - Coronaviruses in general have the potential to cause severe harm to pregnant women and their developing child.
   - During pregnancy, the possibility of serious illness from virus infections is greater because the body’s immune system is weakened.
   - SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) and MERS (Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome) caused severe complications among women who were infected during pregnancy.
   - Based on similarities to SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), pregnant women could be at increased risk of severe infections and illness.

3. **As true for the general U.S. population, the risk for pregnant women to COVID-19 is relatively low.**
   - Influenza remains a much greater risk to pregnant women in the U.S. than COVID-19.
   - Pregnant women who believe they have been exposed to COVID-19 should inform their doctor.
   - When a woman is pregnant, her immune system changes, making her more susceptible to respiratory illnesses.
   - Pregnant women with influenza are ~ 3.5 times more likely to be hospitalized than non-pregnant women.

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15 Clinical characteristics and intrauterine vertical transmission potential of COVID-19 infection in nine pregnant women available at: https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)30360-3/fulltext


17 Journal of the American Medical Association coronavirus updates available at: https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/pages/coronavirus-alert

104. Can pets and livestock be infected with COVID-19?

**Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):**

1. *The virus that causes COVID-19 can cause illness in animals.*
2. *There is no evidence that animals or pets in the U.S. are carrying COVID-19.*
3. *Much remains unknown regarding the new coronavirus that causes COVID-19 and illness in pets and livestock.*

**Longer Answer:**

1. **The virus that causes COVID-19 can cause illness in animals.**
   - Coronaviruses are common in several species of domestic and wild animals, including cattle, horses, dogs, cats, ferrets, camels, bats, and others.
   - Coronaviruses are a large family of diseases and are named for the crown-like spikes on their surface.
     - Examples of coronaviruses that infect humans include common colds, SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Disease) and MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome).
   - Some coronaviruses, such as COVID-19, are zoonotic, meaning they normally exist in animals but can be transmitted to humans.

2. **There is no evidence that animals or pets in the U.S. are carrying COVID-19.**
   - There are very limited reports of dogs testing positive for the virus that causes COVID-19 and the significance is unknown.
   - It is not yet known if COVID-19 can cause illness in dogs, cats, or livestock.

3. **Much remains unknown regarding the new coronavirus that causes COVID-19 and illness in pets and livestock.**
   - It is always safe to wash your hands with soap and water after contact with animals.
   - Washing your hands protects you against various common bacteria such as E.coli and Salmonella that can pass between animals and humans.

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19 Please see World Health Organization Coronavirus  https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus
20 Please see https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/COVID-19/index.html
21 Occupational Safety and Health Administration Coronavirus information available at: https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/novel_coronavirus/
105. How is COVID-19 different from the flu and common cold?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):

1. *Some of the symptoms of COVID-19 illness are similar to influenza.*
2. *Most coronavirus infections in people cause very similar types of respiratory illness.*
3. *Confirmed COVID-19 illness has ranged from mild symptoms to severe illness and death.*

Longer Answer:

1. *Some of the symptoms of COVID-19 illness are similar to influenza.*
   - The main symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, cough, and shortness of breath.
   - People with COVID-19 can progress to high fever, difficulty breathing, and even pneumonia.
   - Different viruses can cause similar symptoms or types of illness.
   - Since initial symptoms are often similar to some of the symptoms of colds and flu (e.g., cough and fever) diagnostic tests help determine if a person has COVID-19.

2. *Most coronavirus infections in people cause very similar types of respiratory illness.*
   - In some mild cases, COVID-19 causes runny nose, cough, sore throat, and fever.
   - Diagnostic tests are needed to help determine if someone has COVID-19.
   - Doctors are still trying to understand the full picture of disease symptoms and severity caused by COVID-19.

3. *Confirmed COVID-19 illness has ranged from mild symptoms to severe illness and death.*
   - For confirmed COVID-19, reported illnesses have ranged from people with mild symptoms to people being severely ill and dying.
   - The death rate for COVID-19 is still unclear, but estimates from initial studies are higher (up to 3.4%) than that of seasonal flu (which is under 1%).
   - Even if you have mild symptoms of a cold or influenza and you are concerned about having contact with COVID-19, you should contact a local health care provider.

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22 CDC Coronavirus information available at: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/COVID-19/faq.html
23 CDC What to Do If You Are Sick with COVID-19 available at: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/COVID-19/about/steps-when-sick.html
25 Please see World Health Organization Coronavirus Questions and Answers https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses
106. How deadly is COVID-19?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):

1. Older people and those with predisposing medical conditions are more likely to have severe illness or die from COVID-19.
2. Increasing COVID-19 cases show fewer people experiencing severe illness or death.
3. Experts believe the COVID-19 is less fatal than the SARS coronavirus.

Longer Answer:

1. Older people and those with predisposing medical conditions are more likely to have severe illness or die from COVID-19.26 27

- Symptoms of COVID-19 can be more severe for older people and those with predisposing medical conditions like diabetes, asthma, or heart disease.
- Being elderly and having other illnesses greatly increases the risk of dying from COVID-19.
  - The World Health Organization mission to China found that nearly 80% of COVID-19 cases were people ages 30 to 79.
  - The Chinese Centers for Disease Control has reported that the fatality rate for people 80 or older is over 14%.
- Higher COVID-19 cases and deaths among the elderly appears to be linked to presence of other health problems, a weaker immune or respiratory system, and poor overall health.
- Older people with underlying lung disease appear to be particularly vulnerable to becoming infected with COVID-19.

2. Increasing COVID-19 cases show fewer people experiencing severe illness or death.26 27 28

- The majority of COVID-19 cases are mild.
- Symptoms of severe COVID-19 illness include pneumonia or breathing difficulties.
- Initial studies indicate that less than 15% of hospitalized patients for COVID-19 are severe.

3. Experts believe the COVID-19 is less fatal than SARS coronavirus.26 27

- More is being learned each week about the severity and mortality of COVID-19 as new cases and data are being reported.
- The mortality rate for COVID-19 varies depending upon age, gender, and access to care.
- Mortality rate for COVID-19 is less than that for SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome).
- COVID-19 illness may be more severe when health resources are limited or overburdened by the outbreak.

26 CDC Coronavirus information available at: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/COVID-19/faq.html
27 World Health Organization Coronavirus Questions and Answers available at: https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses
107. What is the difference between the virus that causes COVID-19 and other coronaviruses that already are circulating in the U.S.?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):
1. Many coronaviruses circulate in the U.S. and the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19 is new.
2. Most circulating coronaviruses cause only mild respiratory illness or the “common cold.”
3. Most COVID-19 illnesses are mild, although some people have severe illness and death.

Longer Answer:
1. Many coronaviruses circulate in the U.S. and the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19 is new.29 30 31 32
   - Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses found in both animals and humans.
   - The coronaviruses that are circulating in the U.S. and the world cause 10% to 30% of upper respiratory tract infections in adults.
   - Neither SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) nor MERS (Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome), both of which are caused by coronaviruses, are circulating in the U.S.

2. Most circulating coronaviruses cause only mild respiratory illness or the “common cold.”29 30 31 33
   - The coronaviruses already in the U.S. usually cause a mild upper respiratory infection.
   - Some coronaviruses can infect the lower respiratory tract, like the lungs, thus causing more serious and sometimes deadly illness.
   - Person-to-person spread of the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 may occur in a fashion similar to other coronaviruses, mainly via tiny droplets from an infected person’s coughs or sneezes.
   - Unlike most coronavirus circulating in the U.S., the coronavirus causing COVID-19 has been found to cause both upper and lower respiratory tract infections.

3. Most COVID-19 illnesses are mild, although some people have severe illness and death.34
   - Most people with COVID-19 appear to have had mild illness or symptoms, while some have been very ill.
   - Unlike other coronaviruses circulating in the U.S., the coronavirus causing COVID-19 can produce a severe respiratory illness, including severe pneumonia, respiratory failure, and death.
   - Some people who get infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 have no symptoms.
   - People who have mild or no symptoms are unlikely to know if they are infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, but they can spread the virus.

29 CDC: Human Coronavirus Types https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/types.html
30 “Coronavirus Infections: More Than Just the Common Cold” Journal of the American Medical Association https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2759815
32 WHO Coronavirus Updates https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses
34 Wired Science “What is Coronavirus?” https://www.wired.com/story/what-is-a-coronavirus/
108. How infectious is the virus that causes COVID-19?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):
1. The virus that causes COVID-19 spreads similarly to viruses that cause the common cold.
2. How easily the virus spreads from person-to-person appears highly variable.
3. Much is still unknown about the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19.

Longer Answer:
1. The virus that causes COVID-19 spreads similarly to viruses that cause the common cold. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a respiratory virus which spreads primarily through close contact with an infected person. The virus can be spread through droplets that are created when a person coughs or sneezes, or through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose. People infected with COVID-19 appear to be most infectious when they are most ill. Experts believe that an infected person without symptoms can also transmit the virus that causes COVID-19.

2. How easily the virus spreads from person-to-person appears highly variable. Since most cases of COVID-19 are mild, many more people are likely to be or have been infected than current testing numbers indicate. As more people are tested, experts will better understand the extent of COVID-19. Scientists have estimated that one infected person could spread COVID-19 to approximately two or three other people unless actions are used to quarantine and physically separate people. Person-to-person spread usually happens after close contact (within about 6 feet) with an infected person.

3. Much is still unknown about the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. Based on currently available data, people who have symptoms are believed to be causing the majority of virus spread, but those with no or mild symptoms also spread the virus. Research is needed to learn more specifics about how the virus that causes COVID-19 is spread, including how well it spreads from touching contaminated surfaces. Effective prevention and control of COVID-19 will be difficult if the virus can be easily transmitted to other people. As experts identify more cases, guidance and control strategies may need to change.

35 CDC Coronavirus information available at: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html
37 WHO Coronavirus Information available at: https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019
109. Can you get COVID-19 from mail packages or imported goods that arrive from infected areas?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):

1. No cases of COVID-19 have been reported from packages or imported goods.
2. Studies suggest that most coronaviruses may persist on surfaces for a few hours or up to several days.
3. The risk of catching COVID-19 from a package that has been moved, travelled, and exposed to different conditions and temperatures is believed to be low.

Longer Answer:

1. No cases of COVID-19 have been reported from packages or imported goods.
   - Experts believe there is little or no risk of COVID-19 from shipped products or packages.
   - If you think a package may be suspect based on factors like origin, clean it with disinfectant.
   - Wash your hands with soap for at least 20 seconds after handling a package.

2. Studies suggest that most coronaviruses may persist on surfaces for a few hours or up to several days.
   - Survival of COVID-19 on surfaces appears to behave like other coronaviruses.
   - Initial studies suggest the virus that causes COVID-19 can survive on surfaces for at least few hours and may survive on plastic, glass, and metal for several days.
   - Virus survival varies under different conditions, such as type of surface, temperature, or humidity.

3. The risk of catching COVID-19 from a package that has been moved, travelled, and exposed to different conditions and temperatures is believed to be low.
   - People receiving packages from countries with confirmed COVID-19 are unlikely to be at increased risk of infection from the package or packaging.
   - The likelihood of a person with COVID-19 contaminating commercial goods is believed to be low.
   - Wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water after bringing in packages, or after trips to the grocery store or other places where you may have come into contact with infected surfaces.
110. How can people avoid or reduce social stigma associated with COVID-19?

**Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):**

1. *Stigma can be as dangerous as the virus that causes COVID-19.*
2. *A virus can infect anyone regardless of race, ethnicity, country, or beliefs.*
3. *People can stop stigma.*

**Longer Answer:**

1. **Stigma can be as dangerous as the virus that causes COVID-19.**
   - Viruses are a threat to all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, or the country one lives in.
   - Stigma and discrimination can occur when people associate an infectious disease with a specific geographical region.
   - Stigma hurts everyone by creating fear or anger towards ordinary people instead of the virus that is causing the problem.
     - Stigmatization of special populations, such as the homeless and non-English speaking people, can spark dangerous incidents.

2. **A virus can infect anyone regardless of race, ethnicity, country, or beliefs.**
   - COVID-19 infections and spread are happening all across the U.S. and the world.
   - Ancestry does not make a person more vulnerable to COVID-19.
   - People should not assume that wearing a facemask implies COVID-19.
     - People wear facemasks for many reasons, including air pollution and pollen.
   - As COVID-19 continues to spread in the U.S. and the world, any person could become infected and get sick.

3. **People can stop stigma.**
   - Speak up if you hear, see, or read misinformation or harassment.
   - Show compassion and support for those most closely impacted.
   - Report harassment.
   - Avoid prejudicial language and actions that imply blame.
   - Share accurate information and cautious about images that reinforce stereotypes.
   - Share stories of people experiencing stigma and the damage it can do.
200 Series: Travel Questions

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205. Why are you restricting travel from some countries but not restricting travel from other countries with COVID-19 cases? .......................................................... 27
201. How effective are travel restrictions and quarantines?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):
1. Travel restrictions and quarantines help limit the spread of contagious disease.
2. Travel restrictions and quarantine measures can help public health authorities control outbreaks.
3. Effective travel restrictions and Quarantine alone may not stop disease spread.

Longer Answer:

1. **Travel restrictions and quarantines help limit the spread of contagious disease.**
   - Travel restrictions and quarantines give public health officials important tools for limiting the person-to-person spread of a contagious disease.
   - The primary purpose of a travel restriction is typically to restrict the geographical movement of people who are, or may be, infected with an infectious disease and thus the geographic range of contact with the disease.
   - The primary purpose of a quarantine is typically to separate from the general population individuals who may have been exposed to an infectious disease but who are not ill.

2. **Travel restrictions and quarantine measures can help public health authorities control outbreaks.**
   - Travel restrictions and quarantines help limit and slow the transmission of cases in the general population by preventing exposures to infected individuals.
   - Travel restrictions and quarantines facilitate contact tracing, i.e., the process of tracking down individuals who were in contact and may have been infected by someone confirmed to be sick.
   - For a new virus for which much is unknown or uncertain, travel restrictions and quarantine measures give scientists more time to understand the virus, develop testing mechanisms, and explore treatment options.
   - Travel restrictions and quarantines reduce strain on treatment facilities and health care providers.

3. **Effective travel restrictions and quarantine alone may not stop disease spread.**
   - Public health strategies, including social distancing measures, such as school closures or cancelling large public gatherings, can help limit the spread of disease.
   - Travels restrictions and quarantines are typically less effective when people are infected with a disease but do not display signs or symptoms of illness.
   - If used excessively, travel restrictions can limit and restrict the movement of needed and critical goods and services, such as prescription drugs and personal protective equipment.
   - Travel restrictions and quarantine can result in stigmatizing people.\(^{40}\)

\(^{40}\) Information on stigmatization and COVID-19 available at: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/related-stigma.html
202. Should I be concerned about travel within the U.S.?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):
1. It is understandable that people are concerned about travelling.
3. If you do travel, practice good hygiene and minimize close contact with others.

Longer Answer:
1. **It is understandable that people are concerned about travelling.**
   - COVID-19 is a new disease infecting large numbers of people in numerous countries.
   - As COVID-19 continues to spread, travel operations, advisories, and guidance are changing.
   - People should avoid non-essential travel to other countries where community transmission is widespread.
     - Continue to stay informed by following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and U.S. State Department travel websites for the latest information.

2. **Travelling increases your chances of getting COVID-19.**
   - Travel presents an opportunity for getting sick due to an often crowded and confined environment.
   - Cases of COVID-19 have been reported in all 50 states, and some areas are experiencing community spread of the disease.
   - If you have questions about your destination, you should check public health department websites for current information.
   - Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk for severe disease.
   - CDC recommends that travelers at higher risk for COVID-19 complications avoid all cruise travel and nonessential air travel.

3. **If you do travel, practice good hygiene and minimize close contact with others.**
   - Travelers should do their best to avoid close contact (within six feet) of people who are sick, especially those who are coughing and sneezing.
   - Travelers should take precautionary actions including frequent hand washing, use of hand sanitizer, covering coughs and sneezes, and avoiding touching their eyes, nose, and mouth.
   - Travelers should use alcohol wipes to wipe surfaces such as tray tables, seat belts, and arm rests.
   - People who are sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing should postpone traveling.

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41 Travel information available at: https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html/
203. How are travel restriction decisions made?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):

1. Travel restrictions must balance risk of exposure against cost of disrupting trade and traffic.
2. The U.S. has imposed major travel restrictions as a result of widespread transmission of COVID-19.
3. Stay-at-home and shelter-in-place travel restrictions are being imposed by state and local officials to foster social distancing.

Longer Answer:

1. Travel restrictions must balance risk of exposure against cost of disrupting trade and traffic.
   - Free movement of persons and goods between the U.S. and other countries is important to the global economy.
   - Travel restrictions can adversely impact the ability of Americans traveling abroad to return to the US without undue interference.
   - Severe travel restrictions are normally imposed only when the risks arising from the free movement of goods and persons outweigh the benefits of free movement.

2. The U.S. has imposed major travel restrictions as a result of widespread transmission of COVID-19.
   - Balancing of risks, costs and benefits is reassessed and re-evaluated as conditions change.
   - U.S. travel restrictions may change as more is known about the spread of the disease and about why there is so much variability in sickness from the disease.

3. Stay-at-home and shelter-in-place travel restrictions are being imposed by state and local officials to foster social distancing
   - Travel restriction information is continually updated at the CDC and US State Department websites. 43 44
   - U.S. travel restrictions may change as outbreaks of COVID-19 change.
   - Travel health warnings and notices can be issued, discouraging all non-essential travel to countries where widespread transmission is taking place.
   - U.S. travel restrictions may change as more is known about the extent to which a person infected with COVID-19 and experiencing no symptoms can spread the disease to others.

44 US State Department travel information available at: https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html/
204. Why has the U.S. adopted travel restrictions that are more stringent than those recommended by the World Health Organization?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):
1. Each country must weigh many factors in setting COVID-19 travel restrictions.
2. WHO has called on countries not to impose excessive COVID-19 travel restrictions.
3. The US has adopted a balanced approach to setting COVID-19 travel restrictions.

Longer Answer:

1. Each country must weigh many factors in setting COVID-19 travel restrictions.
   - Risk factors include the number of cases, deaths from the cases, the ease of transmission, and the effectiveness of risk management controls.
   - Geographic factors include proximity between the countries, the length of a common border, and the ease of evading restrictions.
   - Economic factors include adverse effects on the trade of needed goods and services.
   - Risk and other factors important to one country may be different from those important to other countries.

2. WHO has called on countries not to impose excessive COVID-19 travel restrictions.
   - Excessive travel restrictions may encourage evasion, deliberate self-concealment of illness, and illegal border crossings to avoid scrutiny and possible detection.
   - Excessive travel restrictions can limit and restrict the movement of needed goods and services, including personal protective equipment.
   - Excessive travel restrictions may result in stigmatizing the sick and impinging on civil liberties.

3. The US has adopted a balanced approach to setting COVID-19 travel restrictions.
   - The U.S. balances risks and other factors in setting COVID-19 travel restrictions.
   - Entry points into the U.S. are generally more controllable than in many other countries.
   - Screening of travelers can typically be conducted more effectively and comprehensively in the U.S. than in many other countries.
205. Why are you restricting travel from some countries but not restricting travel from other countries with COVID-19 cases?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):
1. The U.S. has set travel restrictions on countries with COVID-19 outbreaks.
2. In setting travel restrictions, experts balance risks, costs and benefits.
3. CDC has established risk-based criteria for setting travel restrictions.

Longer Answer:
1. **The U.S. has set travel restrictions on countries with COVID-19 outbreaks.**
   - CDC provides a daily update of destinations to be avoided. 45
   - U.S. border patrol agents are asking travelers about their recent travel history and passing out educational materials.
     - CDC has deployed additional staff to screen travelers at entry points.
   - CDC has asked healthcare providers to be alert for travelers from countries with significant COVID-19 outbreaks.

2. **In setting travel restrictions, experts balance risks, costs, and benefits.**
   - Excessive travel restrictions may encourage evasion, deliberate self-concealment of illness, and illegal border crossings to avoid scrutiny and possible detection.
   - Excessive travel restrictions can limit and restrict the movement of needed goods and services.
   - Excessive travel restrictions may result in stigmatizing populations and impinging on civil liberties.
   - U.S. travel restrictions may change as greater clarity is gained about COVID-19.

3. **CDC has established risk-based criteria for setting travel restrictions.**
   - CDC’s risk assessment travel restriction criteria are:
     - Widespread sustained (ongoing) transmission and restrictions on entry by foreign nationals to the United States;
     - Widespread sustained (ongoing) transmission;
     - Sustained (ongoing) community transmission; and
     - Limited community transmission.
   - Travelers should consult the CDC travel information web page for current information. 45

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300 Series: Protection Questions

301. What should I do if I had contact with someone with COVID-19? .................................................. 29

302. What can people do to prevent infection with COVID-19? ................................................................. 30

303. Are facemasks useful to prevent the COVID-19? .................................................................................. 31

304. What type of facemask may be effective against the COVID-19? ......................................................... 32

305. Is there a sufficient supply of facemasks and N95 respirators? .......................................................... 33
301. What should I do if I had contact with someone with COVID-19?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):
1. **Tell your health care provider about your contact with the infected person.**
2. **The virus can be transmitted from person-to-person through close contact.**
3. **Call your health care provider if you notice symptoms of COVID-19.**

Longer Answer:

1. **Tell your health care provider about your contact with the infected person.**
   - Call your health care provider and tell them about your contact with the infected person.
   - Your health care provider will work with your state’s public health department and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to determine if you need to be tested.
   - If seeing a health care provider is not possible, immediately contact the CDC (800-CDC-INFO) to get advice on what to do.

2. **The virus can be transmitted from person-to-person through close contact.**
   - Much is unknown about how the virus spreads and current knowledge is largely based on what is known about similar viruses.
   - Person-to-person spread occurs mainly via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
   - Person-to-person spread usually happens after close contact (within about 6 feet) with an infected person.

3. **Call your health care provider if you notice symptoms of COVID-19.**
   - Watch for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 infection, such as fever, cough, and shortness of breath.
   - If you notice symptoms of COVID-19, call your health care provider in advance to advise you on how to seek care.
   - Calling before you show up for care also allows your provider to take precautions that will help prevent spreading COVID-19 to others.
   - If you notice COVID-19 symptoms, seek advice before travelling to get medical care.
   - Follow expert guidance and avoid dangerous unproven myths and rumors.

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46 Please see Interim guidance for persons who may have COVID-19 (CDC)
47 Please see How COVID-19 Spreads (CDC)
48 Please see Q&A on Coronaviruses (WHO)
49 Please see What to Do If You Are Sick With COVID-19 (CDC)
302. What can people do to prevent infection with COVID-19?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):

1. The best way to prevent infection is avoiding exposure to the virus.
2. Facemasks have limited ability to prevent infection in otherwise healthy people.
3. Everyday basic hygiene is important to prevent infection.

Longer Answer:

1. **The best way to prevent infection is avoiding exposure to the virus.**
   - Avoid close contact (about 6 feet) with people who are sick.
   - If you are sick, stay home and limit contact with others to avoid spreading the virus.
   - Avoid non-essential travel to places where widespread transmission is happening.
   - If the virus is spreading in your community, stay home as much as possible to reduce your risk of being exposed.
   - Avoiding exposure slows the spread of the virus and reduces the strain on the healthcare system.

2. **Facemasks have limited ability to prevent infection in otherwise healthy people.**
   - CDC does not recommend routine use of facemasks as they create a false sense of security and require proper fitting.
   - Facemasks should be worn by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of disease to others.
   - The use of facemasks is crucial for health workers and people who are taking care of someone in close settings (at home or at a health care facility).
   - Unnecessary use of facemasks increases the likelihood of a limited supply for those who are sick and for health care workers who are at the highest risk for disease transmission.

3. **Everyday basic hygiene is important to prevent infection.**
   - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
     - Wash your hands especially after going to the toilet, before eating, and after coughing, sneezing, and blowing your nose.
   - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
   - Use a hand sanitizer if soap and water are unavailable.
   - Cover your coughs and sneezes with a sleeve or tissue (and then throw away the tissue).
   - Clean frequently touched surfaces around the house with regular household cleaners.
   - Follow expert guidance and avoid dangerous unproven myths and rumors.

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51 Please see Coronavirus Prevention and Treatment (CDC)
52 Please see Q&A on Coronaviruses (WHO)
53 Please see Novel Coronavirus Information for Travelers (CDC)
54 Please see COVID-19: What the public should do (CDC)
303. Are facemasks useful to prevent COVID-19?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):

1. Facemasks can help sick people from spreading the virus.
2. Facemasks are not recommended for people who are healthy.
3. If you wear a facemask, you should also use other preventive measures.

Longer Answer:

1. **Facemasks can help sick people from spreading the virus.**
   - If you are sick with COVID-19, you should wear a facemask when you are around other people.
   - A facemask should be used to protect others from getting infected.
   - If you are not able to wear a facemask while you are sick (for example, if you find it hard to breathe while wearing it), then others should not stay in the same room as you or they should wear a facemask.
   - The use of N95 respirators - a filtering facepiece used for breathing - is crucial for health workers and people who are taking care of someone sick with COVID-19 in close settings.

2. **Facemasks are not recommended for people who are healthy.**
   - CDC does not recommend routine use of facemasks as they create a false sense of security and require proper fitting.
   - Unnecessary use and hoarding of N95 respirators and facemasks increases the likelihood that this personal protective equipment may be in short supply for sick people and health care workers who are at highest risk.
   - You should use a facemask if you are caring for someone with suspected COVID-19 infection when in close quarters.

3. **If you wear a facemask, you should also use other preventive measures.**
   - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
     - Wash your hands especially after going to the toilet, before eating, and after coughing, sneezing, and blowing your nose.
     - Use a hand sanitizer if soap and water are unavailable.
   - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
   - Cover your coughs and sneezes with a sleeve or tissue.
   - Clean frequently touched surfaces around the house with regular household cleaners.

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56 Please see What to do if you are sick with COVID-19 (CDC)
57 Please see Q&A on Coronaviruses (WHO)
58 Please see COVID-19 advice for the public: When and how to use masks (WHO)
59 Please see Coronavirus Prevention and Treatment (CDC)
304. What type of facemask may be effective against COVID-19?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):
1. A facemask can help an infected person prevent spreading the virus.
2. N95 respirators may be used by healthcare personnel when caring for an infected patient.
3. If wearing a facemask, you should still practice basic hygiene.

Longer Answer:
1. **A facemask can help an infected person prevent spreading the virus.**
   - Facemasks are flat or pleated (some are like cups) and are attached to the head with straps.
   - The role of a facemask is to prevent contamination of the surrounding area when a infected person coughs or sneezes.
   - A facemask should be used by people who have been exposed to COVID-19 and are showing symptoms of illness like coughing or sneezing.

2. **N95 respirators may be used by healthcare personnel when caring for an infected patient.**
   - A N95 respirator is a tight-fitting personal protective device and requires training and testing to ensure a proper seal.
   - The N95 respirator filters out at least 95% of particles in the air, including large and small particles.
   - N95 respirators are not recommended for routine use in the community.

3. **If wearing a facemask, you should still practice basic hygiene.**
   - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
     - Wash your hands especially after going to the toilet, before eating, and after coughing, sneezing, and blowing your nose.
   - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
   - Use a hand sanitizer if soap and water are unavailable.
   - Cover your coughs and sneezes with a sleeve or tissue.
   - Clean frequently touched surfaces around the house with regular household cleaners.
   - Follow expert guidance and avoid dangerous unproven myths and rumors.

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60 Please see [Frequently Asked Questions about Respirators and their Use (CDC)]
61 Please see [Advice on the Use of Masks during COVID-19 Outbreak (WHO)]
62 Please see [COVID-19 advice for the public: When and how to use masks (WHO)]
305. Is there a sufficient supply of facemasks and N95 respirators?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):
1. Public health officials are working to ensure adequate supply for critical personnel.
2. Facemasks and N95 respirators should be used only where recommended.
3. Facemasks have limited ability to prevent infection in otherwise healthy people.

Longer Answer:

1. **Public health officials are working to ensure adequate supply for critical personnel.**
   - Supplies of N95 respirators — 95% effective in filtering infectious agents — can become depleted when in exceptionally high demand.
   - Supplies and demand for facemasks and N95 respirators will vary by location.
     - It is likely that high demand and high need may cause shortages in some places.
   - Countries, public health officials, and suppliers are continually and closely monitoring the availability of facemasks as well as N95 respirators.

2. **Facemasks and N95 respirators should be used only where recommended.**
   - Facemasks are recommended for use by people who have a confirmed respiratory infection and for people who are taking care of someone in close settings.
   - N95 respirators are recommended for health care workers and are not recommended for routine use in the community.
   - Hoarding of facemasks and N95 respirators could prevent the people who need them most from getting them.

3. **Facemasks have limited ability to prevent infection in otherwise healthy people.**
   - CDC does not recommend routine use of facemasks as they create a false sense of security and require proper fitting.
   - Facemasks should be worn by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of disease to others.
   - The use of facemasks and N95 respirators are crucial for health workers and people who are taking care of someone in close settings (at home or at a health care facility).
   - Unnecessary use of facemasks increases the likelihood of a limited supply for those who are sick and for health care workers who are at the highest risk for disease transmission.
   - Follow expert guidance and avoid dangerous unproven myths and rumors.

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64 Please see Coronavirus Basics (CDC)
65 Please see Respirators and Their Use (CDC)
66 Please see When and How to Use a Mask (WHO)
67 Please see CIDRAP Experts Explain Necessary Respiratory Protection for COVID-19
400 Series: Transmission Questions

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402. Can a person spread the COVID-19 even if they have no symptoms?........36

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405. Can COVID-19 be spread in the air, like measles or tuberculosis, or only by droplets?........39

406. Should schools and social gatherings be canceled?...............................40

407. Do you think state and local health departments are doing enough to prevent the spread of COVID-19?.................................................................41
401. How is COVID-19 acquired?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):
1. The virus that causes COVID-19 likely originally emerged from an animal source.
2. The virus that causes COVID-19 can be transmitted from person-to-person.
3. The best way to prevent infection is avoiding exposure to the virus.

Longer Answer:

1. *The virus that causes COVID-19 likely originally emerged from an animal source.*\(^69\)\(^70\)
   - Coronaviruses are common in many different species of animals, including camels, cattle, cats, and bats.
   - An animal coronavirus can, upon occasion, mutate to become a virus that can infect people.
   - It’s likely that an animal source from a live animal market in China was responsible for some of the first reported human infections.

2. *The virus that causes COVID-19 can be transmitted from person-to-person.*\(^71\)
   - Person-to-person spread usually happens after close contact (within 6 feet) with an infected person.
   - Person-to-person spread occurs mainly via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes or through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose.
   - How easily a particular virus spreads from person-to-person can vary under differing environmental conditions like humidity.
   - 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 eyes.
   - Much is still unknown about how COVID-19 spreads and current knowledge is largely based on what is known about other similar coronaviruses.

3. *The best way to prevent infection is avoiding exposure to the virus.*\(^69\)
   - Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
   - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the toilet, before eating, and after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose.
   - Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.
   - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
   - Follow expert guidance and avoid dangerous unproven myths and rumors.\(^72\)

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\(^69\) Please see [What You Need to Know About COVID-19 (CDC)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/what-to-know-how-to-prevent.html)

\(^70\) Please see [Q&A on Coronaviruses (WHO)](https://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/sars-cov-2)


402. Can a person spread the COVID-19 even if they have no symptoms?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):

1. It is possible that people infected with COVID-19 may be infectious before showing symptoms.
2. More detailed studies are being done to determine whether people acquire COVID-19 from those without symptoms.
3. People are thought to be highly contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest).

Longer Answer:

1. It is possible that people infected with the COVID-19 may be infectious before showing symptoms.  
   - Experts believe it is possible for the virus that causes COVID-19 to be acquired from people who have no symptoms or signs of infection.
   - There have been credible reports that people have acquired COVID-19 from infected people who did not have noticeable symptoms nor signs of illness.
   - There is still much to be learned about how COVID-19 is acquired.

2. More detailed studies are being done to determine whether people acquire COVID-19 from those without symptoms.  
   - Current knowledge is largely based on what is known about similar coronaviruses.
   - Health authorities will continue to watch how COVID-19 is acquired.
   - If people without symptoms can spread the virus effectively, it will be much harder to prevent outbreaks.

3. People are thought to be highly contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest).  
   - COVID-19 is most likely acquired from someone who is actively sick.
   - Person-to-person spread usually happens after close contact (within about 6 feet) with an infected patient.
   - Early and potentially highly efficient transmission of the virus may occur before clinical symptoms or in conjunction with the very first mild symptoms.
   - Most viral respiratory infections, including those caused by coronaviruses, are spread through the coughs and sneezes of infected people who have symptoms.
   - Follow expert guidance and avoid dangerous unproven myths and rumors.

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73 Please see Presumed Asymptomatic Carrier Transmission of COVID-19 (JAMA)
74 Please see How Coronavirus Spreads (CDC)
75 Please see Q&A on Coronavirus (WHO)
76 Please see National Institutes of Health (NIH) Coronavirus Resources
77 Please see New England Journal of Medicine Coronavirus Resources
78 Available at: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html
403. How efficient is the spread of COVID-19?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):

1. Initial data suggest that each person with COVID-19 may infect up to two or three additional people if no mitigation measures are used.
2. According to CDC, some spread might be possible before people show symptoms.
3. Person-to-person infection of COVID-19 usually happens after close contact with an infected person.

Longer Answer:

1. Initial data suggest that each person with COVID-19 may infect up to two or three additional people if no mitigation measures are used.\(^8^0\)\(^8^1\)\(^8^2\)\(^8^3\)
   - How easily a virus spreads depends on properties of the virus and the environment.
     - A strain of virus that spreads more easily through aerosols rather than heavier droplets released when an infected person sneezes or coughs is typically more contagious.
   - The virus that causes COVID-19 seems to be more contagious than most strains of flu, but less contagious than measles.
   - Initial data suggest that the virus that causes COVID-19 is more contagious but less deadly than the virus that causes SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome).
   - The virus that causes COVID-19 seems to be acquired easily in confined spaces.

2. According to CDC, some spread might be possible before people show symptoms.\(^7^6\)\(^8^4\)
   - Although people appear highly contagious when they are sickest and producing the most droplets, asymptomatic transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19 has been reported.
   - Early and potentially highly efficient transmission of the virus may occur before clinical symptoms or in conjunction with the very first mild symptoms.
   - There have been credible reports that people can acquire COVID-19 from infected people without noticeable symptoms or signs of illness.
   - Surfaces may be a potential route of transmission for the COVID-19 virus.
     - COVID-19 virus can remain viable and infectious on surfaces from hours to days.

3. Person-to-person infection of COVID-19 usually happens after close contact with an infected person.\(^6^9\)
   - Person-to-person spread of COVID-19 usually happens between people within 6 feet.
   - Person-to-person acquisition occurs mainly via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes or through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose.
   - 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 eyes.

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\(^{8^0}\) Please see: WHO Statement on IHREC
\(^{8^1}\) Please see: Study of 72,000 COVID-19 Patients (CIDRAP)
\(^{8^2}\) Please see: COVID-19: Navigating the Uncharted (NEJM)
\(^{8^3}\) Please see: How COVID-19 Spreads (CDC)
\(^{8^4}\) Please see Presumed Asymptomatic Carrier Transmission of COIVD-19 (JAMA)
404. Can the COVID-19 be spread from contaminated surfaces?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):
1. COVID-19 can be acquired from contaminated surfaces.
2. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
3. Most often, spread happens among close contacts through respiratory droplets.

Longer Answer:
1. **COVID-19 can be acquired from contaminated surfaces.**
   - Some spread may happen by touching the contaminated surface and touching the eyes, nose, or mouth.
   - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the toilet, before eating, and after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose.
   - Though the virus that causes COVID-19 can exist for hours to days on surface, it is unknown how long the virus remains infectious.

2. **Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.**
   - Simple disinfectants can inhibit the virus that causes COVID-19 from infecting people.
   - If you are sick with COVID-19, do not share personal items with other people in your home.
   - Personal items used by a person with COVID-19 should be thoroughly washed with soap and water.

3. **Most often, spread happens among close contacts through respiratory droplets.**
   - Acquisition of COVID-19 occurs primarily through respiratory droplets produced when an infectious person coughs or sneezes.
   - Close contact is defined as being within approximately 6 feet of a person with COVID-19 for a prolonged period of time.
   - Close contact can occur while caring for, living with, visiting, or sharing a health care waiting area with a person with COVID-19.
   - Surfaces contaminated with the virus that causes COVID-19 are not thought to be the primary way the virus is spread.
   - Follow expert guidance and avoid dangerous unproven myths and rumors.

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85 Please see Q&A on Coronaviruses (WHO)
86 Please see Persistence of Coronaviruses on surfaces (J of Hospital Infection)
87 Please see What to do if you are sick with COVID-19 (CDC)
88 Please see Interim guidance for persons who may have COVID-19 (CDC)
405. Can COVID-19 be spread in the air, like measles or tuberculosis, or only by droplets?

**Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):**

1. **People primarily acquire COVID-19 by respiratory droplets from coughs or sneezes.**
2. **There are important differences between droplet and airborne transmission.**
3. **Only a limited number of diseases are capable of airborne transmission.**

**Longer Answer:**

1. **People primarily acquire COVID-19 by respiratory droplets from coughs or sneezes.**
   - These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby.
   - Spread of COVID-19 may also happen by touching a surface contaminated with an infected droplet and touching the eyes, nose, or mouth.
   - Initial data suggest that each person with COVID-19 may infect up to two or three additional people if no mitigation measures are used.

2. **There are important differences between droplet and airborne transmission.**
   - Droplets are larger and heavier than airborne particles and instead will settle.
   - Compared to measles where the virus clings to airborne particles, the coronavirus is carried primarily by heavier respiratory droplets.
   - When someone with COVID-19 coughs or sneezes, they disperse respiratory droplets that can be full of virus and can travel about three to six feet.

3. **Only a limited number of diseases are capable of airborne transmission.**
   - Unlike measles and tuberculosis, experts believe that COVID-19 does not spread via the airborne route.
   - Spread of COVID-19 happens through respiratory droplets, whereas measles and TB can spread through suspended airborne particles.
   - Measles virus is acquired by direct contact with infectious droplets or by airborne spread when an infected person breathes, coughs, or sneezes.
   - Measles virus can remain infectious in the air for up to two hours after an infected person leaves an area.
   - TB bacteria are acquired via the airborne route and can remain in the air for several hours with the potential to infect large numbers of people.

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90 Please see How COVID-19 Spreads (CDC)
91 Please see Methods of Disease Transmission (Mount Sinai)
92 Please see How TB Spreads (CDC)
93 Please see Measles (CDC)
94 Please see Extensive Nosocomial Transmission of Measles (PubMed)
406. Should schools and social gatherings be canceled?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):

1. Communities are implementing social distancing to include closing schools and limiting gatherings.
2. Quick action by communities is needed to prevent person-to-person spread of COVID-19.
3. Communities should look to federal, state, and local health departments for guidance on social distancing and school closures.

Longer Answer:

1. **Communities are implementing social distancing to include closing schools and limiting gatherings.**
   - “Social distancing” is the public health practice of putting distance between people to prevent the spread of a disease.
   - Most exposures to coronavirus occur after close contact with ill persons.
   - Social distancing measures include closing schools and cancelling public gatherings like church, sporting events, conferences, and festivals.
   - Many communities around the world have already implemented social distancing.
   - Public health officials are asking communities and schools to think ahead and prepare for the possible challenges ahead.
   - Communities should work with their state and local health departments to determine the risk and impact of disease in each of their communities.

2. **Quick action by communities is needed to prevent person-to-person spread of COVID-19.**
   - Schools may need to close because they are places where people congregate.
   - To protect parents, teachers, school staff, and children from becoming infected, school closures may be an important social distancing tool.
   - Children may be unaware that they are carrying the virus that causes COVID-19 and could infect others.
   - Communities should encourage people to avoid close contact – at least 6 feet – with people who are coughing, sneezing, and have a fever.
   - Unintended consequences of school closures, such as impact on working parents, need to be thoroughly considered.
   - Schools should start planning alternative schooling strategies.

3. **Communities should look to federal, state, and local health departments for guidance on social distancing and school closures.**
   - Social distancing has been used successfully in the past to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.
   - Public health authorities have seen the value of social distancing from experiences with measles, SARS, pandemic influenza, and seasonal influenza.
   - Communities should coordinate their planned social distancing efforts with the business sector, such as teleworking and changes to leave policies.
   - Communities should coordinate the social distancing efforts of community-based organizations such as businesses, faith-based organizations, and non-profit organizations.
407. Do you think state and local health departments are doing enough to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):

1. State and local health departments are providing timely and accurate information on COVID-19.
2. Availability of COVID-19 testing kits is improving.

Longer Answer:

1. **State and local health departments are providing timely and accurate information on COVID-19.**
   - State and local health departments are disseminating information on the progress of their response efforts.
   - State and local health departments are providing guidance to communities on prevention and mitigation.
   - State and local health departments are responding quickly to dispel rumors, misperceptions, and stigmatization of affected groups.
   - State and local health departments are providing guidance to private and public sector organizations on social distancing.
   - State and local health departments are working closely with federal agencies, Governors, and local and state emergency management agencies to help inform and plan for the response to COVID-19.

2. **Availability of COVID-19 testing kits is improving.**
   - Commercial and private services are augmenting CDC’s efforts to provide testing and to run diagnostic samples.
   - As data from testing is shared back to state, federal, and local governments, our understanding of the coronavirus pandemic will improve.
   - As case numbers rise as a result of testing, it’s important to understand this increase as an improvement in our ability to detect cases earlier and thereby prevent transmission.
   - State and local health departments government have a highly trained and experienced workforce with years of preparing and practicing for situations like coronavirus.

3. **State and local health departments look to the public and communities for help in controlling the spread of COVID-19.**
   - The best way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 is to avoid being exposed to COVID-19.
     - Everyday preventive actions such as hand washing help prevent the spread of COVID-19.
   - The public and communities can help state and local health departments by following local guidelines for social distancing to include sheltering in place.
   - State and local health departments, together with community support, have successfully controlled outbreaks of SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), Ebola, Zika, measles, pandemic influenza, seasonal influenza, and food borne diseases.
500 Series: Outbreak Questions

501. What is the source of COVID-19? ................................................................. 43

502. How worried should people be about COVID-19? .............................................. 44

503. How contagious is the virus that causes COVID-19? .......................................... 45

504. How rapidly does COVID-19 move from place to place? .................................... 46

505. How long will concerns about COVID-19 last? ................................................ 47
## 501. What is the source of COVID-19?

### Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):

1. **COVID-19 is a coronavirus – a large family of viruses that circulate among humans and animals.**
2. An animal is likely to be the source for the coronavirus that causes COVID-19.
3. There is no evidence that any animals in the United States might be a source of COVID-19.

### Longer Answer:

1. **COVID-19 is a coronavirus – a large family of viruses that circulate among humans and animals.**
   - Coronaviruses occur in several species of animals and reptiles.
     - Potential animal sources of COVID-19 include bats, cattle, horses, dogs, cats, ferrets, camels, bats, and snakes.
   - Some coronaviruses can cause illness in animals and spread between animals and humans.
   - Coronaviruses are zoonotic, meaning they can be transmitted between animals and humans.
   - For a coronavirus to spread from animals to humans, the virus must first go through a series of genetic mutations as it is believed is the case for COVID-19.

2. **An animal is likely to be the source for the coronavirus that causes COVID-19.**
   - The first persons infected with COVID-19 are likely to have acquired the virus directly from animals.
   - The coronavirus that causes COVID-19 has genetic similarities to MERS and SARS that suggest it has its origins in bats.
     - The coronaviruses that caused MERS CoV and SARS CoV have their origins in bats.
   - Researchers in China have suggested that pangolins, which are long-snouted mammals often used in traditional Chinese medicine, may be the animal source of the virus that causes COVID-19.
   - Scientists do not know whether bats were the source of infection for other animals.

3. **There is no evidence that any animals in the United States might be a source of COVID-19.**
   - There is no evidence to suggest that animals pose a risk for spreading COVID-19 in the U.S.
   - There have not been reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19 in the U.S.
   - There are very limited reports of dogs testing positive for the virus that causes COVID-19 and the significance is unknown.
   - There are still many uncertainties regarding COVID-19 and illness in animals.
502. How worried should people be about COVID-19?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):
1. Concern and worry about COVID-19 are understandable given the actions being taken.
2. As the COVID-19 outbreak expands, the risk of being exposed to the virus will increase.
3. The best way to prevent becoming infected is to avoid being exposed to the virus.

Longer Answer:

1. **Concern and worry about COVID-19 are understandable given the actions being taken.**
   - COVID-19 is a new disease infecting large numbers of people and spreading rapidly throughout the world, including the U.S.
   - COVID-19 can result in severe illness, particularly in older adults or individuals with chronic medical conditions.
   - People are concerned because of the increasing number of dramatic and concerning media stories.
   - People are concerned because everyday life presents multiple opportunities for getting sick due to often crowded and confined environments.
   - As authorities learn more, guidelines and recommendations may continue to change.

2. **As the COVID-19 outbreak expands, the risk of being exposed to the virus will increase.**
   - As testing continues to increase, we should expect to see more reported cases of COVID-19.
   - People in places where ongoing community spread is happening are at increased risk for exposure.
   - Public health officials are closely monitoring communities in the U.S. and will adjust guidance and recommendations as needed in order to help keep communities safe.
   - Multiple countries have achieved promising results, such as reducing new COVID-19 cases, with strong public health measures.

3. **The best way to prevent becoming infected is to avoid being exposed to the virus.**
   - If COVID-19 is spreading in your community, stay home as much as possible and put distance between you and other people.
   - Avoiding exposure slows the spread of the virus and reduces the strain on the healthcare system.
   - Everyone should do their best to avoid close contact (within six feet) of people who are sick, especially those who are coughing and sneezing.
   - People should take precautionary actions including frequent hand washing, use of hand sanitizer, covering coughs and sneezes, and avoiding touching their eyes, nose, and mouth after touching surfaces.
   - People who are sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing should stay home and contact their health care provider.
   - Follow expert guidance and avoid dangerous unproven myths and rumors. ⁹⁵

503. How contagious is the virus that causes COVID-19?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):
1. *The virus that causes COVID-19 spreads similarly to viruses that cause the common cold.*
2. *How easily the virus spreads from person-to-person appears highly variable.*
3. *Much is still unknown about the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19.*

Longer Answer:

1. **The virus that causes COVID-19 spreads similarly to viruses that cause the common cold.**
   - The virus that causes COVID-19 is a respiratory virus which spreads primarily through close contact with an infected person.
   - The virus can be spread through droplets that are created when a person coughs or sneezes, or through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose.
   - People infected with COVID-19 are most infectious when they are most ill.
   - It appears an infected person without symptoms may transmit the virus that causes COVID-19.

2. **How easily the virus spreads from person-to-person appears highly variable.**
   - Since most cases of COVID-19 are mild, the disease may be more widespread than current testing numbers indicate.
   - Scientists have estimated that an infected person could spread COVID-19 to two or three additional people if no mitigation measures are used.
   - Person-to-person spread usually happens after close contact (within about 6 feet) with an infected person.
   - People are thought to be highly contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest).
     - Early and potentially highly efficient transmission of the virus may occur before clinical symptoms or in conjunction with the very first mild symptoms.

3. **Much is still unknown about the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19.**
   - Current data supports that people who have symptoms cause the majority of virus spread.
   - Research is needed to learn more specifics about how the virus that causes COVID-19 is spread, including if it spread from touching contaminated surfaces.
   - Effective prevention and control of COVID-19 will be difficult if the virus can be easily transmitted to other people.

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96 CDC Coronavirus information available at: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html
98 WHO Coronavirus Information available at: https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019
100 Available at: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html
101 Clinical features of patients infected with 2019 novel Coronavirus in Wuhan, China. Lancet 2020 available at: https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)30183-5/fulltext
504. How rapidly does COVID-19 move from place to place?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):

1. The virus that causes COVID-19 has moved rapidly from place to place.
2. Scientists are uncertain about how rapidly COVID-19 will continue to spread.
3. The virus that causes COVID-19 appears to move more rapidly than influenza or the SARS viruses.

Longer Answer:

1. The virus that causes COVID-19 has moved rapidly from place to place.
   - COVID-19 is thought to move mainly from person-to-person through the small droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
   - Some transmission of COVID-19 may occur before people show symptoms.

2. Scientists are uncertain about how rapidly COVID-19 will continue to spread.
   - How easily a virus like COVID-19 spreads from person-to-person can vary, depending on different conditions, such as environment.
   - People are thought to be highly contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest), but may also be contagious without showing symptoms.
     - Early and potentially highly efficient transmission of the virus may occur before clinical symptoms or in conjunction with the very first mild symptoms.
   - More testing of people for COVID-19 will bring more confirmed cases but that does not mean the virus is spreading more rapidly.
   - More needs to be learned about how long it take the virus to go from one person to the next.

3. The virus that causes COVID-19 appears to move more rapidly than influenza or the SARS viruses.
   - Scientists estimate that each person who gets sick with COVID-19 could potentially spread it to two or three additional people.
     - How easily a virus spreads from person-to-person varies.
   - People with the flu tend to infect one or slightly more than one additional persons on average.
   - The faster public health officials can find people who are infected and isolate them from other people, the more successful they will be in controlling COVID-19.
   - The faster public health officials can find people who have been in contact with infected individuals, the more successful they will be in controlling COVID-19.
   - Even if the virus that causes COVID-19 spreads slowly, prevention and control will be difficult if COVID-19 can be easily transmitted to other people.
505. How long will concerns about COVID-19 last?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):

1. Concerns will linger until there is more scientific data about the behavior of COVID-19 and its impacts.
2. Concerns will exist because it is likely that the virus that causes COVID-19 will continue to circulate.
3. Concerns about COVID-19 will likely persist as long as the virus continues to spread rapidly.

Longer Answer:

1. **Concerns will linger until there is more scientific data about the behavior of COVID-19 and its impacts.**
   - Viruses are often highly unpredictable in terms of when, where, and why they spread.
   - Viruses are unpredictable in terms of who will be exposed, who will become infected, and the severity of illness that people who are infected will experience.
   - The ability of viruses to spread depends on many things, including the time of year, humidity, and indoor and outdoor temperatures.

2. **Concerns will exist because it is likely that the virus that causes COVID-19 will continue to circulate.**
   - The coronaviruses that are continually in circulation cause about 10% to 30% of mild and severe colds that happen each year.
   - The new influenza virus that caused the 2009-2010 pandemic is still in circulation.
   - Public health departments and experts will be working with communities and healthcare providers to limit the spread of COVID-19.
   - Like influenza pandemics, this new virus will likely become one of the chronically circulating coronaviruses circulating in human populations and cause cold-like symptoms in future years.

3. **Concerns about COVID-19 will likely persist as long as the virus continues to spread rapidly.**
   - Concerns will last depending upon rate of global spread.
   - Concerns will last depending upon time to develop safe and effective medicines and vaccines.
   - The impact of COVID-19 on economies, businesses, workers, and everyday life will extend beyond the illnesses that it causes.
   - Hospitals, healthcare organizations, and communities need to be prepared to handle a surge of COVID-19 cases and local outbreaks.
   - Hospitals, healthcare facilities, nursing home, and places with older patients and people with chronic disease will have to take steps to protect the people who are most vulnerable to severe COVID-19 illness.
600 Series: Response Questions

601. How long will it take to develop a vaccine for COVID-19? .................................................. 49

602. What is the medical treatment for people affected by COVID-19? .......................................... 50

603. Will hospitals be able to handle a major outbreak of COVID-19? ............................................. 51
601. How long will it take to develop a vaccine for COVID-19?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):
1. A massive effort is underway to develop a vaccine for COVID-19.
2. It can take one or two years to develop a fully tested vaccine.
3. Initial supplies of a COVID-19 vaccine would be for those at highest risk.

Longer Answer:
1. A massive effort is underway to develop a vaccine for COVID-19.
   - Many countries, including the U.S. and China, have announced projects to create a safe and effective vaccine to prevent COVID-19.
   - Since this is a newly discovered coronavirus, it is not yet known whether – or how long – it will take to develop a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine.
   - There are many uncertainties and challenges involved in developing new vaccines, including determining how best to provide protection.
   - Availability and decisions on how to use the first available COVID-19 vaccines would likely vary by country.

2. It can take one or two years to develop a fully tested vaccine.
   - Before being licensed for wide use, new vaccines have to first be tested to see if they are safe and effective.
   - In the U.S., a vaccine can be used before it is licensed but this requires an Emergency Use Authorization and an informed consent process.

3. Initial supplies of a COVID-19 vaccine would be for those at highest risk.
   - Indications for vaccine use will likely be prioritized for those at highest risk of complications from disease and those who have the highest risk of exposure.
   - Guidance for vaccine use will be provided by the the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
   - People at highest risk of infection include doctors, nurses, and others who would be caring for infected patients.
   - Until a vaccine is licensed for use, only limited amounts of the vaccine will be available.
602. What is the medical treatment for people affected by COVID-19?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. There is no specific medicine to prevent or treat COVID-19.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. If you believe you have been exposed to COVID-19, contact your health care provider immediately.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The best way to prevent illness is avoiding exposure to COVID-19.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Longer Answer:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. There is no specific medicine to prevent or treat COVID-19.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- People infected with COVID-19 receive supportive care to help relieve symptoms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- People infected with COVID-19 are given medicines and treatment for pain, fever, and coughs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- For severe cases of COVID-19, treatment includes support for vital organ functions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Additional treatments for COVID-19 are being investigated and tested.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. If you believe you have been exposed to COVID-19, contact your health care provider immediately.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Common symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, and shortness of breath.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Call your health care provider if you have common cold symptoms and have been in an area where COVID-19 has been identified.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Call your health care provider if you have common cold symptoms and have been in contact with someone confirmed or being evaluated for COVID-19.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Call ahead before you go to a health care provider office or emergency room and tell them about your recent travels, contacts, and symptoms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Health care providers will evaluate whether you have COVID-19.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. The best way to prevent illness is avoiding exposure to the virus.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Avoid close contact with people who are sick with COVID-19.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Follow expert guidance and avoid dangerous unproven myths and rumors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
603. Will hospitals be able to handle a major outbreak of COVID-19?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):

1. Hospitals are putting in systems for the early detection and mitigation of COVID-19.
2. Hospital staff are trained to quickly isolate people with COVID-19.
3. Hospitals have extensive training and experience controlling disease outbreaks.

Longer Answer:

1. **Hospitals are putting in systems for the early detection and mitigation of COVID-19.**
   - Hospital early detection and containment systems are based on lessons learned from previous disease outbreaks.
   - Hospitals are providing additional training for staff on COVID-19 prevention, containment, and mitigation.
   - Hospitals are expanding their COVID-19 treatment and isolation facilities.

2. **Hospital staff are trained to quickly isolate people with COVID-19.**
   - Hospital workers are trained to quickly identify potential COVID-19 cases.
   - Hospital workers are trained to take travel histories that may indicate COVID-19 infection.
   - Hospital workers train and practice how to put on and take off protective gear, draw blood safely, and dispose of bio-hazardous materials.
   - Identifying and isolating COVID-19 cases quickly can significantly reduce transmission.
   - Health care workers are trained to be on the watch for patients with symptoms that in the early stages of illness may seem like the flu.
   - Health care workers are trained to take travel histories that may indicate contact with COVID-19.
   - Health care workers can test for COVID-19 in suspected individuals.

3. **Hospitals have extensive training and experience controlling disease outbreaks.**
   - Working with federal, state, and local health departments, hospitals have successfully controlled outbreaks of SARS, Ebola, Zika, measles, pandemic influenza, seasonal influenza, and food-borne diseases.
   - Hospitals train, equip, and practice in simulated emergencies for situations like coronavirus.
   - Many hospitals and healthcare facilities are facing significant challenges with the outbreak.
   - CDC has developed a highly specific Hospital Preparedness Assessment Tool for COVID-19.103

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700 Series: Control Questions

701. What are public health departments doing to prevent the spread of COVID-19? .......................... 53

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712. What can businesses do to prepare for COVID-19? .................................................................. 64
701. What are public health departments doing to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):

1. Public health authorities are testing, treating, isolating, and finding contacts of those who have COVID-19.
2. Federal, state, and local authorities are slowing the spread of COVID-19 through social distancing.
3. Health departments and hospitals have training and experience controlling disease outbreaks.

Longer Answer:

1. Public health authorities are testing, treating, isolating, and finding contacts of those who have COVID-19.
   - Health care providers are strengthening early detection and containment systems.
     - Strengthening efforts include better training and protocols for healthcare workers; expanding COVID-19 treatment facilities; targeting and expanding testing; and implementing best practices in risk and crisis communications.
   - Testing, identifying and isolating people infected with COVID-19 can reduce further spread.
     - Health care workers watch for people with symptoms or contact with COVID-19 and conduct appropriate testing.
   - Early tracing of COVID-19 contacts can significantly reduce further spread.
     - People with contact with an COVID-19 infected person should self-quarantine and monitor themselves for symptoms.

2. Federal, state, and local authorities are slowing the spread of COVID-19 through social distancing.\(^\text{104}\)
   - People are thought to be highly contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest), but people without symptoms may also be contagious.
   - CDC has detailed guidelines on monitoring and movement related to COVID-19.
   - Social distancing guidelines, including sheltering-in-place, are intended to “flatten the curve”, i.e., slow the spread of COVID-19 so that fewer people seek treatment at any given time.

3. Health departments and hospitals have training and experience controlling disease outbreaks.
   - Federal, state and local health departments have experience monitoring travelers to prevent disease outbreaks.
   - Health departments and hospitals have successfully controlled outbreaks of SARS, Ebola, Zika, measles, pandemic influenza, seasonal influenza, and food-borne diseases.
   - Health departments and hospitals have highly trained and experienced workforces with years of preparing and practicing for situations like COVID-19.
   - State and local health departments are helping lead their communities for potential impacts from the spread of COVID-19.
   - Health professionals and departments are helping educate communities regarding the risks of COVID-19 transmission and how to best prevent and respond to the spread of COVID-19.

\(^{104}\) Available at: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html
702. What happens when a case of COVID-19 is identified?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):
1. Health care workers identify COVID-19 cases quickly to reduce transmission.
2. Health care workers isolate COVID-19 cases quickly to reduce transmission.
3. Early tracing of COVID-19 contacts can help reduce transmission.

Longer Answer:

1. **Health care workers identify COVID-19 cases quickly to reduce transmission.**
   - Health care workers are trained to identify patients with COVID-19 symptoms.
   - Health care workers are trained to take travel histories indicating contact with COVID-19.
   - Health care workers are trained and practiced in handling COVID-19 cases.

2. **Health care workers isolate COVID-19 cases quickly to reduce transmission.**¹⁰⁵
   - People are thought to be highly contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest).
     - Early and potentially highly efficient transmission of the virus may occur before clinical symptoms or in conjunction with the very first mild symptoms.
   - Health care workers are trained and practiced in how to isolate a patient.
   - Health care systems are highly experienced and effective in caring for patients with highly infectious and deadly infections and do it every day.

3. **Early tracing of COVID-19 contacts can help reduce transmission.**
   - People who have been in contact with an COVID-19 patient are monitored for temperature and symptoms.
   - People who have been in contact with an COVID-19 patient may be quarantined.
   - Health care workers follow CDC’s detailed guidelines on contact tracing.

703. What can communities do to prepare for COVID-19?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):
1. Communities working together is critical to the effectiveness of the COVID-19 response effort.
2. Communities are planning for and implementing social distancing measures.
3. Communities should help prevent discrimination and stigma.

Longer Answer:

1. **Communities working together is critical to the effectiveness of the COVID-19 response effort.**
   - Community hospitals and other healthcare organizations are strengthening their ability to detect and track suspected cases of COVID-19.
   - Businesses should plan for extended absences of employees due to illness or taking care of family members.
   - Communities should work with their health departments and local organizations to improve outreach to the elderly, non-English speaking communities, and those without access to care.
   - As trusted sources, community- and faith-based organizations can reinforce the importance of everyday preventive action steps to members of the community to help prevent the spread of germs.
   - Communities can promote the value of people staying healthy to reduce chances of becoming sick with COVID-19.

2. **Communities are planning for and implementing social distancing measures.**
   - Health officials are recommending social distancing actions that reduce face-to-face contact to limit exposure and illness.
   - Social distancing measures may include canceling large public gatherings and closing schools.
   - Schools should communicate with parents about the decision-making process for potential school closures.
   - The decisions to close schools will be made carefully given how disruptive this can be.
   - Many communities around the world have already implemented social distancing measures in response to COVID-19.

3. **Communities can help prevent discrimination or stigma.**
   - Viruses are a threat to all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, or the country one lives in.
   - Viruses do not target people from specific populations, ethnicities, or racial backgrounds.
   - Viruses do not respect borders and do not discriminate among different types of people.
   - People can help prevent discrimination and stigmatization by staying informed through trusted sources and sharing accurate information.

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106 Please see Preventing COVID-19 Spread in Communities (CDC)

107 Please see Stigma Related to COVID-19 (CDC)
704. What are emergency medical service (EMS) providers doing about COVID-19?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):

1. EMS staff are trained to handle persons with possible COVID-19.
2. EMS clinicians and first responders need to modify their practices for COVID-19.
3. The EMS system works closely with many health partners.

Longer Answer:

1. **EMS staff are trained to handle persons with possible COVID-19.**
   - EMS Emergency Medical Service (EMS) response begins with close coordination and effective communication among the Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) or “911 call centers,” the EMS system, healthcare facilities, and the public health system.
   - PSAPs or Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) centers should question callers about signs, symptoms, and risk factors for COVID-19.
     - If COVID-19 is suspected, prehospital care providers and healthcare facilities should be notified in advance that they may be transporting, caring for, and/or receiving a patient who may have COVID-19.
   - EMS staff includes all first responders, including law enforcement, fire services, emergency medical services, and emergency management officials.
   - Care and transports by EMS present unique challenges because of the nature of the setting, enclosed space during transport, frequent need for rapid medical decision-making, interventions with limited information, and a varying range of patient acuity and jurisdictional healthcare resources.

2. **EMS clinicians and first responders need to modify their practices for COVID-19.**
   - CDC has extensive guidance for EMS providers on modifying their practices for COVID-19.
   - The CDC recommended modifications of EMS practices with respect to COVID-19 include:
     - Patient assessment and precautions for aerosol generating procedures
     - Transport of a suspect or confirmed COVID-19 patient to a healthcare facility
     - Documentation and cleaning of transport vehicles
     - Follow-up or reporting measures.

3. **The EMS system works closely with many health partners.**
   - EMS personnel include first responders, including law enforcement, fire services, emergency medical services, and emergency management officials.
   - EMS personnel work closely with 911 Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs, or call centers), the wider EMS system, healthcare facilities, the public health system, city and county health departments, state health departments, and CDC.

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705. What is isolation and quarantine? What’s involved?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):
1. Isolation and quarantine can help limit the spread of contagious disease.
2. Isolation separates infected people from others.
3. Quarantine separates individuals believed to be exposed who are not yet ill.

Longer Answer:
1. **Isolation and quarantine can help limit the spread of contagious disease.**
   - Quick action by health officials is needed to prevent person-to-person spread of a contagious disease.
   - Both isolation and quarantine have been used successfully to prevent the spread of communicable disease.
   - People who have been exposed to a communicable disease might not know it.
   - Isolation separates infected people from others; quarantine separates individuals believed to be exposed who are not yet ill.

2. **Isolation separates infected people from others.**
   - Isolation is a way to limit the spread of disease.
   - Isolation is a standard public health practice for disease control.
   - Isolation is a medical decision that can be legally enforced.
   - Isolation typically involves putting an infected person in a separate room or special area, for example, of a hospital.
   - Isolation protects healthy people and caregivers from disease.
   - Isolation protects infected people from getting other diseases.
   - Isolation protects family and friends of infected people from getting sick.
   - Isolation allows for the delivery of specialized care to infected persons.
   - Hospitals have plans that describe how to isolate patients.

3. **Quarantine separates individuals believed to be exposed who are not yet ill.**
   - Quarantine separates and restricts the movement of people.
   - Quarantine is an action taken for an individual with a believed exposure who is not yet ill (not presenting signs/symptoms).
   - To implement quarantine, a person is asked to remain separate from other people to avoid spreading infection if they become ill.
   - Quarantine has been successfully used to prevent the spread of communicable disease.
   - Quarantine may be voluntary or involuntary based on medical evaluation.
   - The CDC has published guidelines on monitoring symptoms and controlling movement of persons that relate to quarantine.
Where will sick people be placed in the state if they are under isolation or quarantine orders?

**Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):**

1. Quarantine can be done at homes as well as at special facilities.
2. Special facilities may be needed if large numbers of people are involved.
3. Many communities have plans for quarantine procedures during a disease outbreak.

**Longer Answer:**

1. **Quarantine can be done at homes as well as at special facilities.**
   - Quarantine sites are determined in part by the number of cases.
   - Based on medical evaluation, quarantine may be done at a private residence or specialized facility.

2. **Special facilities may be needed if large numbers of people are involved.**
   - Facilities may be needed to quarantine many people in many locations, particularly individuals who become ill when they are not near their home.
   - Local and state emergency plans identify facilities that can be used for quarantine.
   - The federal government is working with states and cities to identify additional facilities for quarantine.

3. **Many communities have plans for quarantine procedures during a disease outbreak.**
   - Disease control plans describe the equipment needed to implement quarantine.
   - Disease control plans describe the supplies needed for quarantine.
   - Disease control plans describe the medicines needed for quarantine.
707. Can quarantined (or isolated) people stay at home, or will they be forced to go to hospitals or some secure location?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):

1. In most cases, individuals are asked to voluntarily quarantine at home.
2. People in isolation may be cared for in their homes, in hospitals, or in designated healthcare facilities.
3. Quarantine and isolation measures require the trust and participation of the public.

Longer Answer:

1. In most cases, individuals are asked to voluntarily quarantine at home.\(^{109}\)\(^{110}\)\(^{111}\)
   - Quarantine is a public health measure used to separate or restrict the movement of people who may have been exposed to a contagious illness.
   - Quarantined individuals do not have symptoms and may not be sick or contagious.
   - Quarantine may involve a variety of control strategies including short-term, voluntary home confinement; restrictions on travel for those who may have been exposed; or restrictions on passage into and out of an area.

2. People in isolation may be cared for in their homes, in hospitals, or in designated healthcare facilities.\(^{112}\)\(^{113}\)
   - Isolation is a public health measure that separates sick people with a contagious disease from people who are not sick.
   - The decision of where to isolate a person is based on multiple factors including severity of illness, need for testing, and appropriateness of a home environment for isolation purposes.
   - Seriously ill patients may be cared for in hospitals, while individuals with mild illness may be cared for at home.
   - Patients who aren’t hospitalized should stay at home, except for getting medical care, and avoid contact with others until they are no longer contagious.
   - The decision to end home isolation should be made with your doctor.

3. Quarantine and isolation measures require the trust and participation of the public.\(^{110}\)\(^{111}\)
   - In most cases, quarantine and isolation are done voluntarily and participation of the public is necessary to prevent the spread of contagious diseases.
   - Federal, state, and local health officials have the authority to enforce quarantine and isolation if necessary.

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\(^{109}\) Please see Quarantine and Isolation (CDC)
\(^{110}\) Please see Isolation and Quarantine – Info for Public (Michigan Dept of Comm Health)
\(^{111}\) Please see Travelers from China Arriving in the US (CDC)
\(^{112}\) Please see What to do if you are sick with 2019-nCoV (CDC)
\(^{113}\) Please see New Coronavirus – What You Need to Know (CA Dept of Public Health)
708. Why isn’t the U.S. government placing travel and other restrictions on people from any country that has COVID-19?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):

1. *The U.S. has set travel and other restrictions on countries experiencing significant COVID-19 outbreaks.*
2. *In setting travel restrictions and other restrictions, experts balance risks, costs, and benefits.*
3. *CDC has established risk-based criteria for setting travel and other restrictions for COVID-19.*

Longer Answer:

1. **The U.S. has set travel and other restrictions on countries experiencing significant COVID-19 outbreaks.**
   - U.S. border patrol agents are asking travelers about their recent travel history and distributing educational materials.
     - CDC has deployed additional staff to screen travelers at entry points.
   - CDC has asked healthcare providers to be alert for travelers from countries with significant COVID-19 outbreaks.
   - CDC provides a daily update of destinations to be avoided.\(^\text{114}\)

2. **In setting travel restrictions and other restrictions, experts balance risks, costs, and benefits.**
   - Excessive travel restrictions may encourage evasion, deliberate self-concealment of illness, and illegal border crossings to avoid scrutiny and possible detection.
   - Excessive travel restrictions can limit and restrict the movement of needed goods and services.
   - Excessive travel restrictions may result in stigmatizing populations and impinging on civil liberties.
   - U.S. travel restrictions may change as greater clarity is gained about COVID-19.

3. **CDC has established risk-based criteria for setting travel and other restrictions for COVID-19.**
   - CDC’s risk assessment levels for travel restriction criteria are:
     - Widespread sustained (ongoing) transmission and restrictions on entry by foreign nationals to the United States;
     - Widespread sustained (ongoing) transmission;
     - Sustained (ongoing) community transmission; and
     - Limited community transmission.
   - For up-to-date information, travelers should consult the CDC travel information web page\(^\text{114}\) or U.S. State Department travel advisory web page\(^\text{115}\).
   - If the spread of COVID-19 increases in other countries, travel notices or public health precautions such as quarantine procedures may be implemented as needed.

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709. What actually happens in quarantine?

**Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):**

1. Quarantine is a public health measure used to limit the spread of contagious disease.
2. In most cases, individuals are asked to voluntarily quarantine at home.
3. Health departments can assist individuals with the quarantine process.

**Longer Answer:**

1. *Quarantine is a public health measure used to limit the spread of contagious disease.*
   - Quarantine separates or restricts the movement of people who may have been exposed to a contagious illness.
   - Quarantined individuals do not have symptoms and may not be sick or contagious.
   - Quarantine is different from isolation, another common public health measure.
   - Isolation separates sick people with a contagious disease from people who are not sick.

2. *In most cases, individuals are asked to voluntarily quarantine at home.*
   - Public health officials regularly ask people who may have been exposed to a communicable disease to stay at home and avoid contact with other people.
   - Representatives from the health department will monitor these individuals and will provide further instructions as needed.
   - Implementing quarantine measures requires the trust and participation of the public to help prevent the spread of contagious diseases.

3. *Health departments can assist individuals with the quarantine process.*
   - Health departments have plans in place to assist individuals with the quarantine process and often work with community organizations to provide key services.
   - Health departments can assist individuals under quarantine with services that will allow them to stay home and limit their contact with others, including the delivery of food, prescriptions, and other basic necessities.
   - Other services, including mental health resources or assistance talking with an employer may also be available.
   - If you have specific questions or are having difficulty remaining at home during your quarantine, contact your health department for assistance.

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116 Please see Quarantine and Isolation (CDC)
117 Please see Federal Quarantine Guidance for Novel Coronavirus (Washington St DOH)
118 Please see Isolation and Quarantine Response Plan (Seattle & King County Pub Health)
How can individuals prepare for COVID-19?

**Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):**

1. Social distancing strategies are being implemented in many communities.
2. Create a household plan of action.
3. Everyday basic hygiene is important to prevent infection.

**Longer Answer:**

1. **Social distancing strategies are being implemented in many communities.**
   - In many communities, health officials are recommending social distancing actions that reduce face-to-face contact to limit exposure and illness.
   - Social distancing measures include canceling social gatherings and closing schools.
   - Parents should reach out to their child’s school to learn about plans for early dismissals or online instruction.
   - Understand the school plan for continuing education and social services (such as student meal programs) during school dismissals.

2. **Create a household plan of action.**
   - Meet with members of your household, relatives, friends, and neighbors to discuss what to do if a COVID-19 outbreak occurs in your community.
   - Plan ways to care for those who might be at greater risk for serious complications, including the elderly and people with chronic health conditions.
   - Make arrangements for back-up care for children or elderly relatives in case their regular caregiver is sick or their school is closed.

3. **Everyday basic hygiene is important to prevent infection.**
   - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
   - Wash your hands especially after going to the toilet, before eating, and after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose. Use a hand sanitizer if soap and water are unavailable.
   - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands and cover your coughs and sneezes with a sleeve or tissue.
   - Clean frequently touched surfaces around the house with regular household cleaners.
   - Follow your local and state health department for specific recommendations about how you can stay safe.
   - Follow expert guidance and avoid dangerous unproven myths and rumors.

**Sources:**

119 Please see What to expect from COVID-19 (Philadelphia Department of Public Health)
120 Please see Get Your Household Ready for COVID-19 (CDC)
121 Please see COVID-19: What the public should do (CDC)
711. Who is most at risk and how can individuals prepare for COVID-19?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):

1. Older adults and people with predisposing illnesses are especially vulnerable to COVID-19.
2. Practicing everyday preventative measures is very important.
3. If you know someone who is at increased risk, help them stay healthy.

Longer Answer:

1. **Older adults and people with predisposing illnesses are especially vulnerable to COVID-19.**
   - Older adults, and people who have a predisposing condition making them more susceptible to COVID-19, are at higher risk for getting seriously ill or dying from COVID-19.
   - The vast majority of people with COVID-19 do not require hospital care.
   - A smaller percentage of people with COVID-19 get severely ill with respiratory problems like pneumonia.

2. **Practicing everyday preventative measures is very important.**
   - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
     - Wash your hands especially after going to the toilet, before eating, and after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose.
   - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
   - Use a hand sanitizer if soap and water are unavailable.
   - Cover your coughs and sneezes with a sleeve or tissue.
   - Clean frequently touched surfaces around the house with regular household cleaners.
   - Follow expert guidance and avoid dangerous unproven myths and rumors.

3. **If you know someone who is at increased risk, help them stay healthy.**
   - If you live with a person at increased risk, make sure to wash your hands every time you come in from outside.
   - Consider running errands, such as picking up groceries, for people at risk of COVID-19 so they do not have to go out.
   - Persons who have symptoms of COVID-19 should not visit the elderly in their homes or in nursing homes.

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123 Please see [What you Should Know About the First COVID-19 Cases (Seattle PH)](https://www.seattle.gov/coronavirus/first-cases)
124 Please see [Who is Getting Sick, and How Sick? (STAT)](https://www.statnews.com/2020/03/13/who-getting-sick-coronavirus/)
127 Please see [How to Prepare for the Coronavirus (NYT)](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/13/health/how-to-prepare-for-coronavirus.html)
712. What can businesses do to prepare for COVID-19?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):

1. Businesses should plan for extended absences of employees due to illness.
2. Businesses should apply infection control measures in the office.
3. Businesses should stay informed and clearly communicate updates to employees.

 Longer Answer:

1. **Businesses should plan for extended absences of employees due to illness.**

   - Businesses can cross-train employees to carry out key functions so the workplace can operate when essential staff are out sick.
   - Businesses should actively encourage sick employees to stay home.
   - Businesses should consider expanding telework and ensure employees have what they need to work from home.
   - Businesses should ensure that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance, and that employees are aware of these policies.

2. **Businesses should apply infection control measures in the office.**

   - Businesses should promote regular and thorough hand-washing by employees, contractors, and customers.
   - Businesses should put hand sanitizer dispensers in prominent places around the workplace.
   - Surfaces (desks and tables) and objects (telephones and keyboards) in offices should be wiped with disinfectant regularly.
   - Employees who report having a fever or respiratory illness upon arrival to work or who become sick during the work day should be separated from others and immediately sent home.
   - Businesses should designate a separate area at work where sick employees can temporarily be isolated.

3. **Businesses should stay informed and clearly communicate updates to employees.**

   - Businesses should determine how to get updated information from credible sources and relay information about the outbreak to employees and business partners.
   - Businesses should ensure employees are aware of U.S. State Department and CDC travel advisories.
   - Businesses should reinforce key preventive measures for employees to include frequent hand washing and staying home while sick.

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128 Please see Planning for a Coronavirus Pandemic (Seattle & King County PH)

129 Please see COVID-19: Control and Prevention (OSHA)

130 Please see Getting Your Workplace Ready for COVID-19 (WHO)

131 Please see COVID-19: Interim Guidance for Businesses (CDC)


800 Series: Media Questions

801. What is expected from the news media regarding COVID-19? ................................................................. 66

802. Has the news media over-reacted and sensationalized COVID-19? ................................................................. 67
801. What is expected from the news media regarding COVID-19?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):
1. News media are vital for getting information about COVID-19 to interested and affected populations.
2. News media will be a valuable ally during a major COVID-19 outbreak.
3. Through effective media communication, public health officials can engage the public and help them to make informed and better decisions.

Longer Answer:

1. News media are vital for getting information about COVID-19 to interested and affected populations.
   - News media play a critical role in keeping the public informed about COVID-19.
   - News media serve as an important source of information for the public about changes in the COVID-19 situation.
   - News media provide key information about public concerns to public health officials.
   - News media help inform the public about COVID-19 guidance, recommendations, and available services.

2. News media will be a valuable ally during a major COVID-19 outbreak.
   - News media can quickly provide urgent information during a major COVID-19 outbreak.
   - News media can reach large numbers of people during a major COVID-19 outbreak.
   - News media can help public health officials reach major target audiences during a major COVID-19 outbreak.
   - News media can assist public health officials in countering rumors and misinformation.
   - News media can assist public health officials in encouraging appropriate behaviors during a major COVID-19 outbreak.¹³⁴

3. News media should verify facts and instruct people to follow expert guidance and avoid dangerous unproven myths and rumors.
   - Through effective media communication, public health officials can engage the public and help them to make informed and better decisions.
   - News media can enhance public confidence in the ability of public health officials to deal with COVID-19.
   - News media can raise awareness of actual or potential risks.
   - News media can direct readers and viewers to federal, state, and local public health websites and other trusted sources of information about COVID-19.

802. Has the news media over-reacted and sensationalized COVID-19?

Key Messages/Shorter Answer (Soundbite):

2. COVID-19 creates many opportunities for news media sensationalism.
3. News media sensationalism can be tempered by effective risk communication.

Longer Answer:

   - COVID-19 is a new threat to health in the United States and the world.
   - There is no vaccine or specific medicine for COVID-19.
   - Invisible, deadly risk agents such as COVID-19 generate high levels of public fear and anxiety.
   - The global COVID-19 outbreak has many scientific uncertainties.

2. *COVID-19 creates many opportunities for news media sensationalism.*
   - Missteps, mistakes, and disagreements are likely to be sensationalized by parts of the news media.
   - COVID-19 presents the news media with many dramatic photographic and video opportunities.
   - News media should verify facts and instruct people to follow expert guidance and avoid dangerous unproven myths and rumors.\(^{135}\)

3. *News media sensationalism can be tempered by effective risk communication.*
   - Public health officials can temper media sensationalism by providing timely, accurate, and credible information.
   - Public health officials can temper media sensationalism by being transparent.
   - Public health officials can temper media sensationalism by acknowledging uncertainties.
   - Public health officials can temper media sensationalism by being willing to admit mistakes.
   - Public health can temper media sensationalism by expressing authentic care and acknowledging emotions.

Appendices

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Appendix A: COVID-19 Resources

Webpages:

**CDC**

**WHO**
Continued – Appendix A: COVID-19 Resources

- Disease Outbreak News (DON).

**Background Research – Articles & White Papers:**


  https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)30211-7/fulltext

  https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)30154-9/fulltext

  https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099(20)30141-9/fulltext


- Data sharing and outbreaks: best practice exemplified, David L. Heymann.
  https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)30184-7/fulltext


**Other Resources:**

  https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/685d0ace521648f8a5beeeee1b9125cd

- Map/dashboard: Coronavirus COVID-19 Global Cases by Johns Hopkins CSSE.
  https://www.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6
Appendix B: Message Mapping

I. Overview

"Message maps" are risk communication tools used to help organize complex information and make it easier to express current knowledge. The development process distills information into easily understood messages written at an approximately 6th to 8th grade reading level.

Messages are presented initially in no more than 3-5 short sentences that convey 3-5 key messages, in as few words as possible. The approach is based on surveys showing that lead or front-page media and broadcast stories usually convey only 3 key messages usually in less than 9 seconds for broadcast media or 27 words for print.

Each key message has 3-5 supporting messages. These can be used when and where appropriate to provide context for the issue being mapped.

II. SAMPLE MESSAGE MAP – SMALLPOX (WITH KEYWORDS IN ITALICS)

Stakeholder: Public
Question or Concern: How contagious is smallpox?

a. Bullet format message map

Shorter Answer:
• Smallpox spreads slowly compared to other diseases.
• The slow spread of smallpox allows time to find those infected.
• People infected with smallpox can be vaccinated to prevent illness.

Longer Answer:
• Smallpox spreads slowly compared to other diseases.
  o People are only infectious when the rash appears.
  o Smallpox typically requires hours of face-to-face contact.
  o There are no smallpox carriers without symptoms.

• The slow spread of smallpox allows time to find those infected.
  o The time period before smallpox symptoms appear is 10–14 days
  o Resources are available for finding people who may have become infected with smallpox.
  o Finding people who have been exposed to smallpox and vaccinating them has proven successful in the past.

• People infected with smallpox can be vaccinated to prevent illness.
  o People who have never been vaccinated are the most important to vaccinate.
  o Adults who were vaccinated for smallpox as children may still have some immunity.
  o Adequate smallpox vaccine is on hand.
Continued – Appendix B: Message Mapping

b. Box Format Message Map

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder: Public</th>
<th>Question or Concern: How contagious is smallpox?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Message 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Key Message 2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smallpox spreads slowly compared to other diseases.</td>
<td>The slow spread of smallpox allows <em>time to find</em> those infected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Information 1-1</td>
<td>Supporting Information 2-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People are only infectious when the rash appears.</td>
<td>The time period before smallpox symptoms appear is 10–14 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Information 1-2</td>
<td>Supporting Information 2-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smallpox typically requires hours of face-to-face contact.</td>
<td>Resources are available for finding people who may have become infected with smallpox.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Information 1-3</td>
<td>Supporting Information 2-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are no smallpox carriers without symptoms.</td>
<td>Finding people who have been exposed to smallpox and vaccinating them has proven successful in the past.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Continued – Appendix B: Message Mapping

III. Nine Principles of Message Mapping

1) Limiting the number of key messages to a maximum of 3-5 using as few words as possible, ideally no more than 9 seconds or 27 words to express the necessary information.

2) Constructing messages that can be easily understood by an adult with a 6th to 8th grade education. This can be tested using the “readability” utility in word-processing programs.

3) Adhering to the “primacy/recency” or “first/last” principle. This principle states that the most important messages should occupy the first and last position in a list.

4) Citing third parties or sources that would be perceived as credible by the receiving audience.

5) Providing a preamble to the message map that indicates genuine empathy, listening, caring and compassion – crucial factors in establishing trust in high-concern, high-stress situations.

6) Developing graphics, visual aids, analogies and narratives (such as personal stories), which can increase an individual’s ability to hear, understand and recall a message by more than 50%.

7) Constructing messages while recognizing the dominant role of negative thinking in high-concern situations. Examples include: avoiding unnecessary, indefensible or non-productive uses of absolutes, and of the words “no”, “not”, “never”, “nothing” and “none”; balancing or countering a negative key message with positive, constructive or solution-oriented key messages; and providing three or more positive points to counter a single negative point or bad news.

8) Presenting the full message map using the repetitive structure found in the “Tell me, Tell me more, Tell me again model” (the “Triple T Model”): telling people the information in summary form (i.e., the three key messages; telling people more (i.e., the supporting information); and telling people again what was told in summary form (i.e., repeat the three key messages).

9) Developing key messages and supporting information that address important risk perception, outrage and fear factors such as trust, benefits, control, voluntariness, dread, fairness, reversibility, catastrophic potential, effects on children, morality, origin and familiarity.
Appendix C: Media Interviews: Tips and Pitfalls

Authors:

Dr. Vincent T. Covello, Center for Risk Communication and CrisisCommunication.net
Dr. Randall N. Hyer, Center for Risk Communication and CrisisCommunication.net

1. Overview

In general, the media is interested in the following:

- Human interest stories
- Bad news more than good news
- People’s perspectives
- Yes or no/safe or unsafe answers
- Front-page news stories.

2. Preparing for the Media Interview

- To maximize your impact, prepare and practice delivering your key message.
- For broadcast media: 27 words or 9-second "sound bite."
- For print media: 1 to 3 key messages.
Continued – Appendix C: Media Interviews: Tips and Pitfalls

3. Before, During, and After a Media Interview

   a. Before the Media Interview

Do:

- Ask who will be conducting the interview.
- Ask which subjects they want to cover.
- Caution them when you are not the correct person to interview because there are topics you cannot discuss (because lack of knowledge, etc.).
- Inquire about the format and duration.
- Ask who else will be interviewed.
- Prepare the key take away messages you want the media to report.
- Practice.

Don’t:

- Tell the news organization which reporter you prefer.
- Ask for all the questions in advance.
- Insist they do not ask about certain subjects.
- Demand your remarks not be edited.
- Insist an adversary not be interviewed.
- Think that keeping a lid on the story will prevent the media from finding out.
- Assume it will be easy.

   b. During the Media Interview

Do:

- Express caring, concern, or empathy.
- Acknowledge the legitimacy of people’s emotions and concerns.
- Be honest and accurate.
- Stick to your key message(s).
- State your conclusions first, then provide supporting data.
- Offer to get information you don’t have.
- Stress the facts.
- Give a reason if you can’t discuss a subject.
- Correct mistakes by stating you would like an opportunity to clarify.
Continued – Appendix C: Media Interviews: Tips and Pitfalls

Don't:

- Lie or try to cloud the truth.
- Improvise or dwell on negative allegations.
- Raise issues you don't want to see in the story.
- Fail to think it through ahead of time.
- Guess.
- Use jargon or assume the facts speak for themselves.
- Speculate or discuss hypothetical situations.
- Lose your composure.
- Say, "No comment."
- Demand an answer not be used.

c. After the Media Interview

Do:

- Remember you are still on the record.
- Be helpful. Volunteer to get information. Make yourself available.
- Respect deadlines.
- Watch for and read the resulting report.
- Call the reporter to politely point out inaccuracies, if any.

Don't:

- Assume the interview is over or the equipment is off.
- Refuse to talk further.
- Ask, "How did I do?"
- Ask to review the story before publication or broadcast.
- Complain to the reporter's boss first.
Appendix D: Periodic Table for High Concern Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Periodic Table for High Concern Communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CCO</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CVD</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TBC</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CAP</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>IN-3P</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>IDK</strong></td>
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<td><strong>FA</strong></td>
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<td><strong>AGL-4</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PJR</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>G/WI</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>YIN</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AAF</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Periodic Table** Use these templates for high concern, risk, crisis, and change management situations.

**CCO** (Chief Compliance Officer)
- Use when appropriate, use in a crisis, or when high concern.
- Provide information or training.
- Communicate updates or changes.
- Provide additional resources.
- Provide support or guidance.

**CVD** (Chief Veterinary Officer)
- Use when appropriate, use in a crisis, or when high concern.
- Provide information or training.
- Communicate updates or changes.
- Provide additional resources.
- Provide support or guidance.

**TBC** (Chief Technology Officer)
- Use when appropriate, use in a crisis, or when high concern.
- Provide information or training.
- Communicate updates or changes.
- Provide additional resources.
- Provide support or guidance.

**CAP** (Chief Administrative Officer)
- Use when appropriate, use in a crisis, or when high concern.
- Provide information or training.
- Communicate updates or changes.
- Provide additional resources.
- Provide support or guidance.

**IN-3P** (Chief Information Officer)
- Use when appropriate, use in a crisis, or when high concern.
- Provide information or training.
- Communicate updates or changes.
- Provide additional resources.
- Provide support or guidance.

**IDK** (Chief Information Technology Officer)
- Use when appropriate, use in a crisis, or when high concern.
- Provide information or training.
- Communicate updates or changes.
- Provide additional resources.
- Provide support or guidance.

**FA** (Chief Financial Officer)
- Use when appropriate, use in a crisis, or when high concern.
- Provide information or training.
- Communicate updates or changes.
- Provide additional resources.
- Provide support or guidance.

**AGL-4** (Chief Operating Officer)
- Use when appropriate, use in a crisis, or when high concern.
- Provide information or training.
- Communicate updates or changes.
- Provide additional resources.
- Provide support or guidance.

**PJR** (Chief Program Officer)
- Use when appropriate, use in a crisis, or when high concern.
- Provide information or training.
- Communicate updates or changes.
- Provide additional resources.
- Provide support or guidance.

**G/WI** (Chief Marketing Officer)
- Use when appropriate, use in a crisis, or when high concern.
- Provide information or training.
- Communicate updates or changes.
- Provide additional resources.
- Provide support or guidance.

**YIN** (Chief Human Resources Officer)
- Use when appropriate, use in a crisis, or when high concern.
- Provide information or training.
- Communicate updates or changes.
- Provide additional resources.
- Provide support or guidance.

**AAF** (Chief Legal Officer)
- Use when appropriate, use in a crisis, or when high concern.
- Provide information or training.
- Communicate updates or changes.
- Provide additional resources.
- Provide support or guidance.
Appendix E: WHO Guidebooks on “Effective Media Communication during Public Health Emergencies”

**Handbook**

The handbook describes a seven-step process to assist officials and others to communicate effectively through the media during emergencies.

- Handbook (pdf, 448 kb)

**Field Guide**

The Field Guide is a shortened version of the Handbook. It highlights the practical aspects of the seven-step approach.

- Field Guide (pdf, 218 kb)

**Wall Chart**

The chart shows the seven-step approach and provides easily recalled key information and advice.

- Wall Chart (pdf, 218 kb)
Appendix F: CDC’s Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) Toolkit

_manual_

The CERC Manual describes the principles of crisis and emergency risk communication and how to address different challenges while communicating during a crisis or emergency. It provides guidance for all stages of an emergency and can be applied to any public health emergency.

- Online Handbook:
  https://emergency.cdc.gov/cerc/manual/index.asp
Appendix G: Master Question List for COVID-19 (caused by SARS-CoV-2)

Weekly Report

This DHS Science and Technology Directorate (DHS S&T) developed Master Question List summarizes current information known about COVID-19. The document can assist government decision makers in the operational response to COVID-19 and allow structured and scientifically guided discussions.

- Online Handbook: