



## COVID-19

# What It Is, How It's Treated, and How You Can Avoid It

### THE BASICS

COVID-19, sometimes called the coronavirus, is a **respiratory virus that spreads easily from person to person**. There are many types of human coronaviruses, including some that cause mild upper-respiratory tract illnesses and others that cause more severe symptoms. COVID-19 is a new disease, caused by a coronavirus that has not been seen in humans before. It causes mild symptoms in some people and severe symptoms or even death in others. Because COVID-19 has spread all over the world, it is now considered a pandemic.

### KNOW THE SIGNS

Symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- fever
- dry cough
- shortness of breath
- fatigue (extreme tiredness)
- aches and pains
- sore throat
- less common: diarrhea, runny nose or nausea



For most healthy people, there's a low risk of COVID-19 becoming severe. But COVID-19 is more likely to lead to pneumonia, organ failure or even death in these groups:

- adults ages 65 and over
- people with underlying health problems, such as diabetes, moderate-to-severe asthma, heart disease or lung disease
- people who are immunocompromised, such as those undergoing cancer treatment

If you have trouble breathing, pain or pressure in your chest, confusion, or bluish lips or face, **call your doctor or 911 right away.**

### YOUR RISK

You're more likely to get COVID-19 if you've been in close contact with another person who has had the illness, or if you live in—or have recently traveled from—an area where ongoing community spread of the virus has been reported. See [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) and click on "Cases and Latest Updates" to see reports on community spread. Healthcare workers are also at a higher risk of getting COVID-19. ▶

## TREATMENT

At this time, there is no specific medicine approved to treat COVID-19.

**If you are sick, call your doctor.** He or she will give you instructions about getting care without exposing other people to the virus, and may tell you to stay at home if your symptoms are not too severe.

If you're recovering at home, follow these self-care tips:

- **Get lots of rest.**
- **Drink plenty of water and other clear fluids, like chicken broth.**
- **Stay in a specific room and away from other people as much as possible.**
- **Avoid sharing dishes, glasses, bedding and other household items.**
- **Stay home from work, school and public areas.**

## SOCIAL DISTANCING

It's estimated that for every confirmed case of COVID-19, there are another 5 to 10 that haven't been detected yet. And because it's possible to carry COVID-19 without showing symptoms, **simply avoiding people who are obviously sick is not enough to slow the spread** of the virus.

Medical experts warn that if we don't change our daily habits, so many people will get sick in a short amount of time that hospitals and doctors' offices will be overwhelmed—making it impossible for sick people to get the care they need. That's why they're urging people to practice social distancing. This means:

- **Stay home as much as possible.**
- **Only go out for basic needs like groceries and medicine, or to exercise outdoors and enjoy nature.**
- **Don't shake hands.**
- **Stay 6 feet away from people who are not part of your household.**

Social distancing is proven to slow the spread of the virus. Slowing the spread helps hospitals have enough rooms, supplies and staff to care for patients. This is called "flattening the curve."

## TRUSTED SOURCES

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)

World Health Organization: [who.int](https://www.who.int)

National Institutes of Health: [nih.gov](https://www.nih.gov)

# REDUCE YOUR RISK

Take these steps to lower your chance of getting COVID-19:

- **Frequently wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.**
- **Routinely clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as counters and doorknobs.**
- **Cover your mouth and nose with your elbow or a tissue when you cough or sneeze.**
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.**

