

Learning About Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Overview

What is coronavirus (COVID-19)?

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is caused by a virus. It is an illness that was first found in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. It has since spread worldwide.

The virus can cause fever, cough, and trouble breathing. In severe cases, it can cause pneumonia and make it hard to breathe without help. It can cause death.

Coronaviruses are a large group of viruses. They cause the common cold. They also cause more serious illnesses like Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). COVID-19 is caused by a novel coronavirus. That means it's a new type that has not been seen in people before.

This virus spreads person-to-person through droplets from coughing and sneezing. It can also spread when you are close to someone who is infected. And it can spread when you touch something that has the virus on it, such as a doorknob or a tabletop.

What can you do to protect yourself from coronavirus (COVID-19)?

The best way to protect yourself from getting sick is to:

- Avoid areas where there is an outbreak.
- Avoid contact with people who may be infected.
- Wash your hands often with soap or alcohol-based hand sanitizers.
- Avoid crowds and try to stay at least 2 metres (6 feet) away from other people.
- Wash your hands often, especially after you cough or sneeze. Use soap and water, and scrub for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water aren't available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your mouth, nose, and eyes.

What can you do to avoid spreading the virus to others?

To help avoid spreading the virus to others:

- Cover your mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Use a disinfectant to clean things that you touch often.
- Stay home if you are sick or have been exposed to the virus. Don't go to school, work, or public areas. And don't use public transportation.
- If you are sick:

- Leave your home only if you need to get medical care. But call the doctor's office first so they know you're coming. And wear a face mask, if you have one.
- If you have a face mask, wear it whenever you're around other people. It can help stop the spread of the virus when you cough or sneeze.
- Clean and disinfect your home every day. Use household cleaners and disinfectant wipes or sprays. Take special care to clean things that you grab with your hands. These include doorknobs, remote controls, phones, and handles on your refrigerator and microwave. And don't forget countertops, tabletops, washrooms, and computer keyboards.

When to call for help

Call **911** anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You have severe trouble breathing. (You can't talk at all.)
- You have constant chest pain or pressure.
- You are severely dizzy or light-headed.
- You are confused or can't think clearly.
- Your face and lips have a blue colour.
- You pass out (lose consciousness) or are very hard to wake up.

Call your doctor or nurse call line now if you develop symptoms such as:

- Shortness of breath.
- Fever.
- Cough.

If you need to get care, call ahead to the doctor's office for instructions before you go. Make sure you wear a face mask, if you have one, to prevent exposing other people to the virus.

Where can you get the latest information?

The following health organizations are tracking and studying this virus. Their websites contain the most up-to-date information. You'll also learn what to do if you think you may have been exposed to the virus.

- **Government of Canada** : The Government of Canada website has the latest information on the virus in Canada. The website also provides travel advice and tells you how to prevent the spread of infection. www.canada.ca
- **U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**: The CDC provides updated news about the disease and travel advice. The website also tells you how to prevent the spread of infection. www.cdc.gov
- **World Health Organization (WHO)**: WHO offers information about the virus outbreaks. WHO also has travel advice. www.who.int

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