

# COVID-19 General Information

## What is it?

COVID-19 is a respiratory infection. It is caused by an RNA virus called nCoV19 that is part of the SARS lineage of coronaviruses.

## What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of COVID-19 are: fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Those who develop serious illness generally are found to have pneumonia.

## How does it spread?

COVID-19 can spread from person to person, primarily between people who are in close contact—within about 6 feet—of one another, through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It also may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then by touching their mucous membranes (mouth, nose, eyes). It is believed it can live on surfaces in the range of hours to days. Some early studies indicate that it may also be passed through stool/feces.

## Is there a vaccine?

There is currently NO vaccine to protect against COVID-19. While there are numerous efforts underway to develop a vaccine, (in fact you may have heard the first human trial began on 3/17/2020) historical experience would suggest it will be at least a year before one is commercially available to the general public. Please refer to [www.coronavirus.gov](http://www.coronavirus.gov).

## Who is most at risk?

Most cases of COVID-19 worldwide have been mild and >80% of infected individuals have been able to fully recover at home. However, some people are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness and should take additional precautions. Those people include:

- People over the age of 60, particularly people those over the age of 80;
- People who have chronic medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes, chronic lung disease, chronic renal disease, cancer and obesity; and

- People who have a suppressed immune system from medications or those that have a compromised immune system.

Early indication is that the cause of death in individuals with COVID-19 is sepsis, ARDS and/or cardiac arrest. Please refer to [www.coronavirus.gov](http://www.coronavirus.gov).

### **What should I do if I have symptoms?**

If someone thinks they have been exposed to COVID-19 and develops symptoms such as fever, cough and/or difficulty breathing, they should first CALL a health care professional for medical advice. Please refer to [www.coronavirus.gov](http://www.coronavirus.gov).

### **Is it true that people can infect others before they themselves show any symptoms?**

Yes. It is believed a person can be contagious several days before symptoms appear and up to 14 days after symptoms have ended. Please refer to [www.coronavirus.gov](http://www.coronavirus.gov).

### **Should healthy individuals wear a mask to prevent COVID-19 infection?**

The CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19. Wearing a facemask may cause you to touch your face more often. You should only wear a mask if your health care professional recommends it. A facemask may be recommended for people who have symptoms consistent with COVID-19. This is to protect others from the risk of getting infected. The supply of face masks are crucial for health workers and other people who are taking care of someone infected with COVID-19 in close settings (at home or in a health care facility). Please refer to [www.coronavirus.gov](http://www.coronavirus.gov).