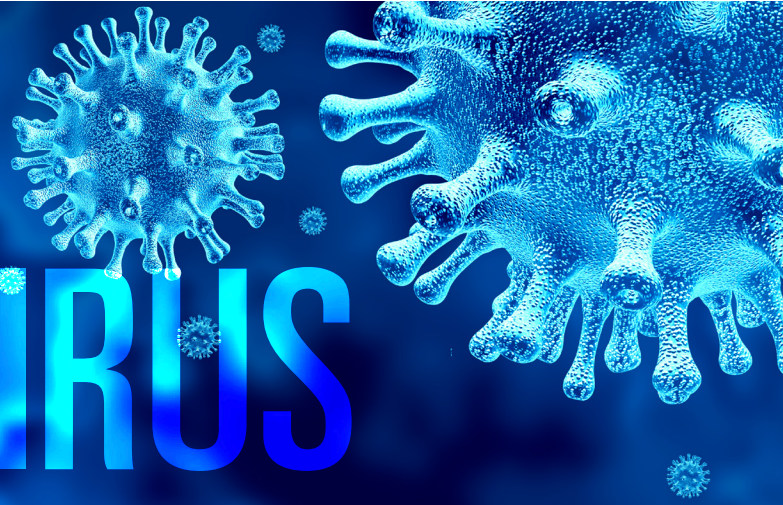




Hackensack  
Meridian Health

# COVID-19



## What You Need to Know About Coronavirus & COVID-19

### Clinical Contributor

**Jerry Zuckerman, M.D.**, vice president of Infection Prevention & Control at Hackensack Meridian Health

### What is coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel coronavirus that was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China.

### Can I get COVID-19?

Currently, the actual number of COVID-19 infections here in the United States is relatively low. There are some precautions we can all take to keep ourselves healthy.

### How does COVID-19 spread?

Current understanding about how the virus that causes the COVID-19 infection spreads is largely based on what is known about similar coronaviruses.

### Person-to-person spread occurs:

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet)
- Via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes

- When these droplets land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or are inhaled into the lungs

### Spread from contact with infected surfaces or objects

- It may be possible that a person can become infected with COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the new coronavirus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose or eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

### What can you do to avoid getting sick?

The same precautions you take to avoid the flu will also help prevent the spread of this new virus.

### How is COVID-19 different than the flu and other viral infections?

COVID-19 causes flu-like symptoms including fever, cough and breathing difficulty. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which are thought to cause up to 30% of common cold cases. Certain strains like SARS, MERS and now COVID-19 can cause more serious illness.

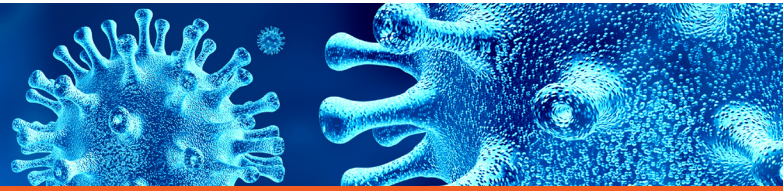
### What should you do if you think you may be at risk?

If you develop a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness, such as cough or shortness of breath, within 14 days after travel outside of the U.S. you should call ahead to a health care professional and mention your recent travel or close contact. This will help your providers take steps to avoid the spread of potential germs.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Chinese Journal of Epidemiology

## FIVE STEPS you can take to protect yourself and others from viruses and help stop the spread of germs:

1. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
2. Stay home when you are sick.
3. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper arm.
4. Clean your hands. Frequent washing helps protect you and others from germs. Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
5. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are often spread this way.



# Common Myths about COVID-19 Explained



## Clinical Contributor

**David S. Perlin, Ph.D.**, chief scientific officer of the Center for Discovery and Innovation at Hackensack Meridian Health

### **Claim: COVID-19 is more dangerous than the flu.**

#### **TRUE & FALSE**

This strain of coronavirus seems to be a bit more aggressive than the flu. Especially those with underlying conditions that make them highly susceptible to respiratory diseases.

Although the symptoms can be more aggressive, less people are currently exposed to COVID-19 in the US, making it in some ways, less chance of serious illness than the flu.

### **Claim: COVID-19 spreads faster than the flu.**

#### **UNCLEAR**

It's not yet clear if COVID-19 spreads faster than the flu, however both do spread quite quickly. Similar to other viruses, COVID-19 is spread through droplets that come from the respiratory tract when someone coughs or sneezes.

### **Claim: You shouldn't travel outside of the United States.**

#### **FALSE**

The risk of COVID-19 infection is only high in some countries with high burdens of disease. CDC updates travel restrictions regularly.

### **Claim: Everyone should wear a mask.**

#### **FALSE**

The average person wearing a mask is not going to do much to protect them. The best way to prevent the spread of disease is to practice good hygiene and common-sense health precautions.

If you are exposed to someone who is ill, wash up immediately and avoid touching your mouth, nose and eyes. Eating healthy and getting enough rest is important

as well, to help strengthen your immune system. You should also monitor your symptoms closely and contact your doctor if you start to see signs of illness.

Within health care facilities, special respirators called "N95 respirators" have been shown to greatly reduce the spread of the virus among medical staff.

### **Claim: COVID-19 will continue to spread.**

#### **TRUE**

We should expect to see more cases of COVID-19, however, we are doing our best to isolate those patients. If you use common sense precautions to prevent the spread of disease (practicing good hygiene), there is less of a risk.

### **Claim: Everyone is at high risk of being impacted by COVID-19**

#### **FALSE**

Similar to the flu, individuals with compromised immune systems are at higher risk. This would include the elderly and hospitalized patients with pneumonia, and those in long-term care facilities.

### **Claim: Warm weather will kill the virus.**

#### **UNCLEAR**

It's unclear. We are hopeful that COVID-19 will dissipate similarly to SARS. The idea is that through isolation and quarantines, the virus will be controlled and die out.

Information about COVID-19 is continuously evolving, but **the immediate health risk for the American public who are unlikely to be exposed to the virus at this time is considered low.** If you're concerned, the CDC offers several tools to help determine if you're at risk of being impacted by COVID-19.

Overall, and we can't stress this enough, practicing good hygiene is the most important thing you can do at this time. We should think of this as a bad flu for which we don't have treatments or vaccines yet available.