

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

COVID-19 most commonly causes cold or flu-like symptoms. These may include fever, cough, difficulty breathing, sore throat, body aches or chills. It can also cause serious problems, such as shortness of breath, pneumonia (from the virus), possibly respiratory failure requiring a breathing machine (a type of life support) and even death, especially in older people and people with existing health problems. Some people don't experience any symptoms at all but could nonetheless spread the virus to someone else. [Learn more about symptoms from the CDC >](#)

I have symptoms of COVID-19. What should I do?

- Please call your primary health care provider for guidance. **For your safety and the safety of others, please do not come to an urgent care clinic or emergency room unless you have been instructed to do so.**
- If you are experiencing life-threatening symptoms such as difficulty breathing or pressure in the chest, please call 911
- If you come to any area of the hospital and are concerned that you may have COVID-19, or if you have a fever or cough, please wear a mask and go directly to the reception desk to speak to a staff member. Do not wait in the waiting room.

[Learn more about what to do if you are sick from the CDC >](#)

How is COVID-19 spread?

- If you are within six feet of someone with COVID-19 infection, the infection could spread to you through droplets when the person sneezes or coughs
- If you touch an object—such as a door handle—that has the COVID-19 virus on it, and then you touch your mouth, nose, or eyes, you can infect yourself
- If you are helping care for someone with COVID-19 and you within six feet of them when they cough or sneeze

COVID-19 does not travel through the air, other than up to six feet of an infected person as described above. [Learn more about how COVID-19 spreads from the CDC >](#)

Who is at risk of getting sick with COVID-19?

While anyone can get COVID-19, currently it appears that patients who are older, have suppressed immune systems, or have chronic medical conditions are more likely to experience serious illness with COVID-19. [Learn more about at-risk populations from the CDC >](#)

Is there a treatment for COVID-19?

There also is no specific antiviral treatment for COVID-19. People with COVID-19 commonly treat their symptoms at home with rest, fluids and other common cold or flu treatments, although some may require medical care to treat more severe symptoms.

Is there a vaccine?

Scientists around the globe—including researchers at the [Ragon Institute of Mass General, MIT and Harvard](#)—are working on developing a vaccine to combat COVID-19, however, currently there is no vaccine to protect against the virus.

I once took Tamiflu when I had the seasonal flu. Can I take a similar drug to protect me from COVID-19?

No. There currently is no vaccine or specific antiviral treatment for COVID-19.

Is COVID-19 seasonal like the flu? Will warm weather stop the outbreak?

At this time, it is not known whether the spread of COVID-19 will decrease when weather becomes warmer. There is much more to learn about the transmissibility, severity and other features associated with COVID-19 and investigations are ongoing.

Should I wear a face mask to prevent COVID-19?

The CDC does not recommend that people who are feeling well wear a face mask to protect themselves from respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19. You should only wear a mask if a health care professional recommends it or if you are a health care professional caring for patients who are on certain precautions. As always, if you have a fever or cough when at any of the Mass General campuses, please pick up a mask at any information desk to help prevent the spread of germs of all kinds. [Learn more about prevention from the CDC >](#)

Is the MGH prepared to care for patients with coronavirus?

As one of only 10 Regional Ebola and Other Special Pathogens Centers in the country, Mass General has teams of clinical staff who are trained to provide safe care to patients during this kind of outbreak. Hospital doctors, nurses, infection control specialists, emergency preparedness specialists and administrators have been closely monitoring the coronavirus outbreak.

I have an upcoming appointment at Mass General. Should I cancel?

As part of the MGH's COVID-19 response efforts, we are working to defer appropriate elective and non-urgent care to ensure the safest possible environment for our patients and staff. We will be reaching out to patients to update them if changes to their appointments are needed.

How can I protect myself and my family?

There are simple everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses. These include:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available
- Stay home if you are sick

[Learn more about prevention from the CDC >](#)

I have a vacation planned, should I cancel it?

The best, most up-to-date resource for information about travel alerts is located on the [CDC website](#). You can find a list of destinations the CDC recommends travelers avoid for all nonessential travel due to the widespread transmission of COVID-19. It also posts recommendations for older adults and those with chronic medical conditions to postpone travel plans to certain areas.

Can the virus that causes COVID-19 be spread through food, including refrigerated or frozen food?

Currently there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 associated with food. Before preparing or eating food it is important to always wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds for general food safety.

Should I have extra food and supplies at home?

For emergencies of any kind, it is always good to keep supplies on hand, including food, water and medicine. Visit [www.ready.gov](#) for preparedness checklists and plans. This is a good time for you to create, review and discuss your family's emergency plan.

Information is changing rapidly, and it is important to stay up to date. Here are some recommended links, but be sure to check back regularly as the newest information becomes available:

- Mass General Coronavirus Updates: [www.massgeneral.org/news/coronavirus/coronavirus-latest-updates](#)
- CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention): [www.cdc.gov/](#)
- CDC Coronavirus Disease FAQs: [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html](#)
- Massachusetts Dept. of Public Health Coronavirus Updates: [www.mass.gov/resource/information-on-the-outbreak-of-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19](#)
- City of Boston Coronavirus Updates: [www.boston.gov/news/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-boston](#)