

# COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2)

## General Public Fact Sheet

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COVID-19 is a disease caused by the virus SARS-CoV-2. COVID-19 most often causes respiratory symptoms. Most people with COVID-19 have mild symptoms, but some people become severely ill, including people who are older or have a weakened immune system, certain disabilities or underlying health conditions. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. A person infected with COVID-19 also may not experience any symptoms and, without knowing, can transmit the virus to others.

COVID-19 spreads when an infected person breathes out droplets and very small particles that contain the virus. These droplets and particles can be breathed in by other people or land on their eyes, nose, or mouth. In some circumstances, they may contaminate surfaces they touch. The majority of COVID-19 transmission occurs early in the course of illness, generally in the 1-2 days before symptoms and the 2-3 days after.

### Symptoms of COVID-19

People with COVID-19 can have a wide range of illness - from no symptoms at all to mild or severe illness.

Symptoms can include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

This list does not include all possible symptoms. Older adults and people who have underlying medical conditions like heart or lung disease or diabetes seem to be at higher risk for developing more serious COVID-19 illness.

### Emergency warning signs of COVID-19

If someone has any of the following symptoms, they should seek emergency medical care immediately:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion
- Inability to wake or stay awake
- Pale, gray, or blue-colored skin, lips, or nail beds, depending on skin tone

## Staying Home While Ill

It is always important to stay home and away from others when you are ill. Individuals with symptoms of COVID-19 should stay home and should not attend child care, school or work until fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications and other symptoms are mild and improving.

*\*Healthcare personnel should continue to follow Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations.*

## Avoiding contact with those at higher risk for COVID-19

Individuals who are elderly, have a weakened immune system or have underlying health conditions are at a higher risk for developing more serious COVID-19 illness. People who are sick with COVID-19 symptoms should avoid contact with higher risk individuals for 10 days after symptoms start or if there are no symptoms from the date the test was taken.

*\*Healthcare facilities should continue to follow Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations.*

## Treatment

Most people with COVID-19 have mild illness and can recover at home. If you have COVID-19 and are at a higher risk for developing more serious COVID-19 illness, contact your healthcare provider to discuss if you are eligible for treatment, even if your symptoms are currently mild. Treatment must be started within 5-7 days of the start of symptoms to be effective.

## What can I do to protect myself and others from COVID-19?

- Vaccination. The first line of defense against COVID-19 is to stay up to date on COVID-19 vaccines.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Some key times to wash hands are listed below:
  - Before and after eating food
  - Before touching your eyes, nose or mouth
  - After using the toilet
  - After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
  - After leaving a public place
  - After touching objects or surfaces frequently touched by other people, such as door knobs, phones, keyboards, etc.
- Use hand sanitizer. If you cannot wash your hands, alcohol-based hand cleaner may be used if your hands do not look dirty.
- Stay home from work or school when you are ill, and encourage others to do the same.
- Regularly clean surfaces in your home to help prevent the spread of germs.

## Vaccination

There are currently three different vaccines available: Pfizer, Moderna, and Novavax (Note: Novavax is only authorized for people 12 years of age and older). CDC does not recommend one of the vaccines over the other. Each vaccine helps protect people from getting very sick with COVID-19.

Vaccine recommendations for children aged 6 months to 4 years of age, 5 years to 11 years and people 12 years and older can be found on CDC's website.