

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)

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*This is a condensed version of the full article along with edited information from the CDC. ¹

In February 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) designated the disease COVID-19, which stands for coronavirus disease 2019.

Understanding of this novel coronavirus is evolving. Interim guidance has been issued by the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) and by the United States [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC).

Symptoms — Pneumonia appears to be the most frequent manifestation of infection, characterized primarily by fever, cough, dyspnea [shortness of breath].

Transmission — Understanding of the transmission risk is incomplete. Person-to-person spread is thought to occur mainly via respiratory droplets, resembling the spread of influenza. However, given the current uncertainty regarding transmission mechanisms, airborne precautions are recommended routinely in some countries and in the setting of certain high-risk procedures (for medical professionals) in others.

Incubation period — The incubation period for COVID-19 is thought to be within 14 days following exposure, with most cases occurring approximately five days after exposure. This means it can take up to 14 days for a person to start having symptoms.

Prevention

- **Wash hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Soap and water should be used preferentially if hands are visibly dirty.**
- **If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-95% alcohol.**
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.**
- Consider staying home if you are feeling ill.
- Follow CDC's recommendations for using a facemask.
 - CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.
 - Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is also crucial for health workers and people who are taking care of someone in close settings (at home or in a health care facility).

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention-treatment.html>