

What is Coronavirus?

The Novel Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) is a new virus strain that is spread mainly from person-to-person through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure. Reported illnesses have ranged from mild symptoms to severe illness and death for confirmed cases.

Symptoms include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

COVID-19 is most commonly spread from an infected person to others through:

- Respiratory droplets produced by coughing and sneezing.
- Close personal contact, like shaking hands.
- Touching a surface with the virus on it and then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes before washing your hands.

How to protect yourself

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. This is especially important after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.
- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. (Putting a tissue on a table contaminates the surface of the table with germs.)
- Routinely disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces, using a cleaning spray or wipe.
- Avoid travel to high-risk countries. We are discouraging non-essential travel to or through any of the countries for which the CDC has issued a level 2 or 3 travel health notice.
(<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19. You should only wear a mask if a healthcare professional recommends it. A facemask should be used by people who have COVID-19 and are showing symptoms of infection like coughing, sneezing or fever. This is to protect others from the risk of getting infected.

What to do if you are sick

- Stay home if you are sick or believe you have been exposed to the virus, even if you are not showing any symptoms.
- Separate yourself from other people in your home, this is known as home isolation.
- Monitor yourself for fever, coughing and shortness of breath.

When you should seek medical evaluation and advice?

- Call 911 if you have a medical emergency. If you have a medical emergency and need to call 911, notify the operator that you have or think you might have, COVID-19. If possible, put on a facemask before medical help arrives.
- If you are 60 and older, or have underlying conditions such as pregnancy, heart disease, diabetes, lung disease and weakened immune system, work with your doctor to develop a plan to determine your health risks to COVID-19 and how to manage symptoms. If you do have symptoms, contact your doctor immediately.
- For worsening symptoms or difficulty breathing, please contact your primary care provider or consider a virtual visit.
- If you do not have a high-risk condition and your symptoms are mild, you do not need to be evaluated in person and do not need to be tested for COVID-19. (Please see Home Quarantine and Isolation Instructions below)

We ask that you please avoid coming to the emergency department, unless you have a health emergency and/or you have been advised by a provider to do so. This helps prevent the risk of spreading this disease and further exposure in our community and allows us to dedicate critical and limited emergency resources to those who are very sick.

Who should be tested?

A common question right now is, “Why can't I get tested?” The answer: Not everyone needs to be tested. People with flu-like symptoms are not being tested for COVID-19 unless they meet certain criteria set by the CDC. The criteria are set by the CDC as a condition of the FDA-approved emergency use authorization, which allows new tests to be used in an emergency situation on high-risk people only. That criteria have widened in the last week to include people who are hospitalized with symptoms that are otherwise unexplained. That is in addition to testing people with travel history, and people with contacts to a known case. These criteria may evolve to include more people over time, as this situation is evolving rapidly.

Home Quarantine and Isolation Instructions:

If you are currently sick with a fever, respiratory symptoms or a virus, you should avoid exposure to others. If you have possible significant exposure to COVID-19 because of travel or direct exposure to a known case, the current recommendation is for you to stay home for 7 days (home quarantine) even if you do not develop symptoms or your illness has improved. If you are ill, we recommend avoiding exposure to others (home isolation) until you have been well (without a fever or feeling ill) for 72 hours. Many patients will have a prolonged cough after they are sick – if you are otherwise well, contact your doctor or one of the noted resources to determine if it is safe to return to your usual activities.

Guidelines for home quarantine and home isolation include:

- Stay at home and do not have visitors.
- Do not go to another person's home.
- Do not use public transportation.
- Restrict activities outside your home, except for seeking medical care.
- Do not go to work, school or public areas.
- Avoid close contact with household members (stay 10 feet away when possible).
- Cover coughs and sneezes.
- Clean all “high touch” surfaces every day.

- Use separate sleeping and bathroom/bathing facilities, if feasible.
- Avoid sharing personal household items (dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding) with other people or pets in your home. After using these items, they should be washed thoroughly with soap and water.
- Call ahead before visiting your doctor. This will help the healthcare provider's office take steps to keep other people from getting infected or exposed.
- If you have been tested for COVID-19, stay home until your healthcare provider contacts you about your test results.

Does this mean my family or other people I live with need to self-quarantine?

Other members of the household are not required to self-quarantine, unless they have been told by a medical professional to do so. If you develop symptoms and are suspected to have COVID-19, members of the household will be classified as close contacts and will then need to be in self-quarantine.

How is this Virus Treated?

Most people with COVID-19 will recover on their own. There is no specific antiviral treatment recommended for COVID-19. People with COVID-19 should receive supportive care to help relieve symptoms. For severe cases, treatment should include care to support vital organ functions.

Additional Information

For up-to-date information about coronavirus and the community public health response, visit your local public health website.

- CDC: COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- Providence Coronavirus Advisory: <https://www.providence.org/patients-and-visitors/coronavirus-advisory>

Virtual Visits Available

<https://virtual.providence.org/>