

# CORONAVIRUS & COVID-19: PREPARATION AND RESPONSE

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First known as the novel coronavirus, the virus now referred to as COVID-19 has been declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the number of cases in the U.S. and Canada continues to rise. **It's now critical that everyone does their part to limit the spread of the virus, as people without symptoms or with mild symptoms can still spread the virus to others.**

## Risk in the U.S. and Canada

- ▶ Current risk of contracting COVID-19 in the U.S. and Canada varies by community based on the extent of the outbreak and the success of mitigation efforts.
- ▶ About half the people diagnosed with COVID-19 have already recovered. It's estimated over 80 percent of those infected will experience only mild symptoms. **However, even people at low risk for serious health complications should take steps to protect groups who would be at higher risk if they got the virus.**
- ▶ Risk for more serious health effects is highest among:
  - Older adults (age 60 and up)
  - People with underlying health conditions (e.g., heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, cancer)
  - People with weakened immune systems
- ▶ The majority of deaths caused by COVID-19 have occurred among people falling into at least one of these higher risk categories.

## Transmission & Diagnosis

- ▶ **Transmission:** spread primarily through airborne respiratory droplets during coughing and sneezing, but can also be spread through regular breathing. Being in close proximity (less than six feet) to an infected person, especially in enclosed spaces, can result in transmission. Close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands, or touching an object with the virus on it, followed by touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands can spread the virus.
- ▶ **Diagnosis:** If you suspect you have COVID-19, call your healthcare provider. A lab test may be performed and sent to the CDC.

## Signs, Symptoms & Treatment

- ▶ **Incubation:** It takes between 2-14 days for symptoms to appear after exposure. During this time period, people are contagious and able to pass on the virus. The average onset of symptoms is around 5 days.
- ▶ **Symptoms:** Mild to moderate respiratory symptoms similar to the flu may include fever, cough and shortness of breath. In serious cases, these symptoms progress to pneumonia and other life-threatening respiratory conditions.
- ▶ **Treatment:** There is currently no vaccine for COVID-19 and no specific treatment beyond those typically prescribed for seasonal flu. If you are sick with COVID-19 or suspect you are infected, focus on supportive care to relieve symptoms. Do the following to help prevent the disease from spreading:
  - Stay home except to get medical care. Don't go to work, school or public areas and avoid public transportation. **If possible, self-quarantine for at least 14 days after the onset of symptoms to prevent spreading the virus to others.**
  - Wear a surgical mask when around other people or when visiting a health care provider.
  - Call ahead before visiting your doctor so the office can take steps to keep other people from getting infected or exposed.
  - Clean all "high-touch" surfaces everyday with a household cleaning spray or wipe.
  - Avoid sharing personal household items like drinking glasses, utensils or bedding. Wash these items thoroughly with soap and water after use.
  - Seek medical attention if your conditions worsen (e.g., difficulty breathing).
- ▶ Employers should encourage sick workers to stay home or use available telework options. Employers should consider the feasibility of allowing workers who are sick or suspected of being sick to stay home without punitive measures such as loss of pay.

## Preventing & Limiting the Spread of the Virus: Protect Yourself and Others

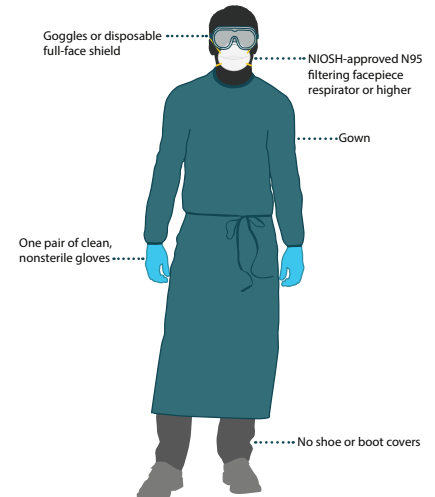
- ▶ Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol when soap and water aren't available.
- ▶ Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands.
- ▶ Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- ▶ Clean "high-touch" surfaces every day with a household cleaning spray or wipe.
- ▶ Avoid close contact with people who are sick. If you are sick, stay home. If you must go out in public, do your best to avoid close contact with other people.
- ▶ Practice social distancing by limiting person-to-person contact within six feet, especially in large groups or in enclosed spaces.



## Preventing & Limiting the Spread of the Virus: Frontline Workers

In addition to the guidelines above, workers who may come in contact with infected persons, such as healthcare workers, should take additional precautions. In addition to the steps above, these workers should:

- ▶ Wear personal protective equipment (PPE). This includes N95 respirators, gloves, gowns and eye protection.
- ▶ Be trained on safe donning, doffing and disposal of PPE to avoid infectious disease transmission.
- ▶ Be medically able to wear the type of respirator needed and fit-tested to wear it. A respirator can't protect you if it doesn't fit your face.
- ▶ Be aware of the differences between surgical masks and N95s. Surgical masks do not protect the wearer from airborne respiratory droplets. **Remember: surgical masks protect others from you; N95s protect you from others.**



For more information: [www.cdc.gov/COVID19](http://www.cdc.gov/COVID19)

## Travel & Potentially Exposed Persons

- ▶ If you are sick or suspect you have the virus, do not travel. Federal government and airline policies regarding international travel are changing rapidly; take this into consideration before booking flights or leaving on your trip.
- ▶ Avoid non-essential travel on commercial airlines, trains and buses for work or personal use; consider alternate options such as video conference calls when possible. Consider the importance of attending events in person versus the risk, and act accordingly.
- ▶ **On March 15, 2020, the CDC issued guidance on mass gatherings: for the next eight weeks, organizers (whether groups or individuals) cancel or postpone in-person events that consist of 50 people or more throughout the U.S.**

## Additional Resources

CDC: [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html)

WHO: [www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019](http://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019)

OSHA: [www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/index.html](http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/index.html)

For more on infection control measures and how employers can respond:

[www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/infection-control.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/infection-control.html)

[www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/guidance-business-response.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/guidance-business-response.html)