

COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions

What is novel coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Many of them infect animals, but some coronaviruses from animals can evolve (change) into a new human coronavirus that can spread from person-to-person. This is what happened with the current novel coronavirus known as COVID-19. Diseases from coronaviruses in people typically cause mild to moderate illness, like the common cold. Some, like the SARS or MERS viruses, cause serious infections like pneumonia. The name of this new virus is SARS-CoV-2; the disease caused by this virus is known as COVID-19.

What are common symptoms of COVID-19?

Information to date suggests this virus is causing symptoms consistent with a respiratory illness such as cough, fever, and shortness of breath. Under current CDC guidance, if a person has traveled to a Level 3 country, they should seek medical care right away. They should first call the doctor's office or emergency room and tell them about their symptoms and recent travel.

How is novel coronavirus spread?

Like other respiratory illnesses, such as influenza, human coronaviruses most commonly spread to others from an infected person who has symptoms through:

- Droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes
- Close personal contact, such as caring for an infected person

It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

How is COVID-19 treated?

There is no specific treatment for COVID-19; however, many of the symptoms can be treated. Treatment is based on the patient's condition. There is currently no vaccine to prevent novel coronavirus. Education on interventions, including everyday preventive actions, avoiding close contact and surface cleaning measures as outlined below, is recommended.

What preventive measures should be taken to help reduce the spread of respiratory viruses, like COVID-19?

ISDH recommends that schools increase education on respiratory and hand hygiene. As with other respiratory illnesses, there are steps that everyone can take daily to reduce the risk of getting sick or infecting others with circulating viruses.

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. Help young children do the same.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Limit close contact, like kissing and sharing cups or utensils, with people who are sick.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. If you do not have a tissue, use your sleeve (not your hands).
- Get a flu shot - it's not too late to be protected against influenza.
- Be aware that face masks are not needed for the general public.