



Connecting Individuals with Disabilities to Their Community

Novel Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions

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The purpose of this document is to provide public health and community partners with frequently asked questions and answers that may be used to assist in responding to inquiries from their communities.

GENERAL INFORMATION

What is a novel Coronavirus?

A novel coronavirus is a new coronavirus that has not been previously identified. The virus causing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is not the same as the [coronaviruses that commonly circulate among humans](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html) and cause mild illness like the common cold. Patients with COVID-19 will be evaluated and cared for differently than patients with the common coronaviruses. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html>

Where did the COVID-19 virus come from?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Some cause illness in people, and others cause illness in animals. Rarely, animal coronaviruses infect people and then can spread person to person. This occurred for the viruses that cause Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 1 (SARS-CoV-1), and probably occurred for the virus that causes COVID-19. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html>

Is the COVID-19 virus the same as the MERS-CoV or SARS-CoV-1 virus?

No. The coronavirus causing COVID-19 is similar to *but not the same* as SARS-CoV-1 that caused the SARS epidemic in 2002 and the MERS Co-V that emerged in 2012. This is important because SARS-CoV-1 and MERS-CoV cause much more serious illness. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html>

Will warm weather stop the outbreak of COVID-19?

It is not yet known if weather and temperature will impact the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Some other viruses, like the common cold and flu, spread more during cold weather months but people can still become sick with these viruses during other months. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html>

ILLNESS AND SYMPTOMS

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Common symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, and, in severe cases, difficulty breathing. Read more about the symptoms of COVID-19 here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html>

How sick are people with COVID-19?

Most people infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 will have no symptoms or mild symptoms. But some (especially those older than 60 years or with other medical conditions) may develop severe illness and even die.

Everywhere I go people are coughing. How do I know they don't have this new virus?

There are many other infections that cause fever and cough. Everyone should try to prevent getting sick from any of these infections and COVID-19 by usual but effective methods described below. If you are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19, due to age >60 or because you have other chronic medical conditions, it is especially important that you take the steps as shown below.

Am I at high risk for serious illness or dying if I get this virus?

If you are at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19, it is extra important for you to take actions to reduce your risk of getting this infection. People who are at higher risk of getting very sick from this infection include:

- Older adults, such as those older than 60 years old.
- People with other chronic medical conditions like:
 - Heart disease
 - Diabetes
 - Lung disease

What should I do right now if I am high risk for getting COVID-19?

Prevent getting infected during the COVID-19 epidemic:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Keep your hands clean.
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing, or having been in a public place.
 - If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
 - To the extent possible, avoid touching high-touch surfaces in public places – elevator buttons, door handles, handrails, handshaking with people, etc. Use a tissue or your sleeve to cover your hand or finger if you must touch something.
 - Wash your hands after touching surfaces in public places.
- Avoid touching your face, especially your nose, eyes, and mouth.
- Practice routine cleaning of frequently-touched surfaces in your environment (for example: tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, toilet handles, faucets, sinks and cell phones).
- Avoid crowds, especially in poorly-ventilated spaces.
- Avoid all non-essential travel including plane trips and cruise ships.

Stay home as much as possible:

- Consider ways of getting household items and food brought to your house through family, social, or commercial networks
- Contact your healthcare provider to ask about obtaining extra necessary prescription medications in case you need to stay home for a prolonged period of time.
 - If you cannot get extra medications, consider using mail-order for medications.
- Be sure you have over-the-counter medicines and medical supplies to treat fever and other symptoms.
 - Most people will be able to recover from COVID-19 at home.

Have a plan in case you get sick:

- Consult with your healthcare provider for more information about [monitoring your health for symptoms suggestive of COVID-19](#).
- Stay in touch with others by phone or email. You may need to ask for help from friends, family, neighbors, community health workers, etc. if you become sick.
- Determine who can provide you with care if your own caregiver gets sick.

Is there a treatment for COVID-19?

People sick with COVID-19 can receive supportive care to help relieve symptoms, such as taking pain or fever medications, drinking plenty of fluids, and resting. Most people sick with COVID-19 can stay at home. Some patients who are very sick may need to go to the hospital.

What if think I might have COVID-19?

If you develop a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness, such as cough or shortness of breath, you should call ahead to your healthcare professional. Your healthcare professional will determine if you need to be tested for COVID-19. <https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/2019-ncov.htm>

When can I go back to work after a respiratory illness/suspect COVID-19?

Any person with COVID-19 compatible symptoms who is not tested and can be managed at home (i.e., does not require hospitalization) should be instructed to self-isolate until:

At least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared	AND	At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery*
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**Recovery is defined as a resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and improvement in respiratory symptoms.*

HOW THE VIRUS SPREADS

Can someone who has COVID-19 spread it to others?

Yes. The virus mainly spreads from person to person through small droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes and then these droplets land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby (within about 6 feet). The virus can also get on a sick person’s hand and then they can infect someone when they shake another person’s hand. That is why you should keep your hands clean and avoid touching your own face.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/transmission.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019ncov%2Fabout%2Ftransmission.html

How else is COVID-19 spread?

Besides the main person-to-person way described above, it is possible that a surface can become dirty with the virus from an infected person. The virus can then survive for a short period of time on that surface. If a person touches that dirty surface, that person can infect themselves by transferring the virus to their own nose, mouth, or eyes. This is much less common than from direct person-to-person contact, but it is why we are recommending frequent hand hygiene and cleaning surfaces that sick people may have coughed on or touched, like handrails.

Can someone spread the virus without being sick?

People are most contagious when they are most symptomatic (that is, have the most symptoms). Less commonly, people may spread the COVID-19 virus in the hours before they realize they are getting sick, but this is not the main way the virus spreads.

Does the virus spread easily?

Since the first cases in China in December, the virus that causes COVID-19 has now become global (a “pandemic”). It is spreading in communities all over the United States. **Community spread** means people have been infected with the virus but may not have the usual risks of international travel or known contact with a confirmed case, so are not sure how or where they became infected. <https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/2019-ncov.htm>

How long does COVID-19 survive on paper and other material?

The virus that causes COVID-19 transmits by respiratory droplets. Its ability to survive on paper has not been studied. There are studies of experimental contamination that show the virus can survive for hours and, in some cases, days. This is another reason why hand hygiene is so important. It may be possible for a person to get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touch their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. Routine cleaning and disinfection can also help prevent the spread of COVID-19 through surfaces.

Can the virus that causes COVID-19 be spread through food, including refrigerated or frozen foods?

Eating contaminated food is not a significant source of infection. Coronaviruses do not survive long on surfaces, so there is very low risk of spread from food products or packaging that are shipped over a period of days or weeks at ambient, refrigerated, or frozen temperatures. Coronaviruses mostly spread from person to person through respiratory droplets, as described above. It is always good practice to wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before preparing or eating food. Learn more what is known about the [spread of COVID-19](#).

TESTING

Who should be tested for COVID-19?

We recommend that testing be performed in individuals with more serious illness (e.g., hospitalized patients), healthcare providers, and individuals who have contact to more vulnerable persons or large groups of people. But as COVID-19 becomes more common in our communities, confirming infection for every patient presenting with fever and respiratory symptoms becomes impractical and does not change how a person’s illness is managed. Further, presenting for testing potentially exposes the public, healthcare workers, and vulnerable persons to COVID-19. For most people with this infection, symptoms will be mild and easily managed at home, as you would for flu. Anyone who develops symptoms should stay home and self-isolate. Additionally, we must preserve our limited personal protective equipment and specimen collection supplies for our healthcare system to be able to care for the minority of patients who develop severe COVID-19 illness over the coming months.

How do I get tested for COVID-19?

The Division of Public Health Services (DPHS) has developed clinical testing guidance for healthcare providers who will decide if you should be tested. Please contact your healthcare provider before going to their office. If you need immediate medical attention (for example, if you are very short of breath), call your Emergency Department or Urgent Care Center before going and tell them about your symptoms.

I heard there is a mobile testing unit for COVID-19 testing. How do I sign up?

The Metropolitan Medical Response System (MMRS) is a self-contained unit of volunteers which is offering mobile testing to select groups throughout the state. Your provider can call the DPHS to help you get testing through this mechanism if you cannot be tested in their office.

I got tested and was told I could get the results from the NH Public Health Laboratories. How do I get my results? If you were tested through your medical provider, urgent care or hospital, the provider who performed your test will provide you with your COVID-19 test result. NH Public Health Laboratories and DPHS are only able to provide COVID-19 test results to the medical provider who ordered the test.

PERSONAL PREVENTION

Is there a vaccine for COVID-19?

Not yet. Scientists are working on developing a vaccine to prevent COVID-19.

<https://www.niaid.nih.gov/diseases-conditions/coronaviruses-therapeutics-vaccines>

How can I protect myself and others from COVID-19?

There are steps you can take to reduce your risk of getting sick from COVID-19 and other respiratory infections, and help prevent transmitting infections to others, including:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not 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.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay home from work or school if you have a fever or are not feeling well.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Clean and disinfect objects and surfaces.
- Get a flu shot—it is not too late to be protected from flu.

<https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/2019-ncov.htm>

Should I buy masks or wear one in public?

Masks should only 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 healthcare workers and people who are taking care of someone in close settings (such as at home or in a healthcare facility). Buying unnecessary masks depletes the supply for healthcare professionals who need them to reduce the spread of disease and keep you safe.

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

PLANNING

Should I plan for COVID-19?

Yes! Everyone has a role to play in getting ready and keeping yourself, your family and your community healthy! Check out these easy to follow recommendations from the CDC:

[Resources for Preparedness in the Home](#)

[Resources for Preparedness in the Workplace](#)

[Resources for Community Preparedness](#)

ISOLATION AND QUARANTINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH MONITORING

What is isolation?

Isolation is intended for people who are sick. People who are sick with COVID-19 must stay separated from others in order to prevent further spread. Isolation in most cases is voluntary but can also be legally compelled by public health order. People in New Hampshire who are under isolation are also under active monitoring, which means a Public Health Professional reaches out to them daily to ensure they are staying isolated and their symptoms are not progressing.

What is quarantine?

Quarantine is intended for people who are not sick. People who are known to have been exposed to COVID-19 must stay separated from others in order to prevent spread in case they become sick. Quarantine in most cases is voluntary, but can also be legally compelled by public health order. People under [self-quarantine](#) for COVID-19 should monitor for symptoms of COVID-19, and notify their provider to consider evaluation and testing.

Can household members of people under quarantine leave their home?

Yes. Household members of persons under quarantine are not required to stay home. As long as the person under quarantine does not show any symptoms, and the household members are well, those living in the same house as someone on quarantine can leave the home. If the person being quarantined develops illness, household members must then also stay home on quarantine.

What is self-observation?

NH DHHS has created a [Self-Observation Guide](#). This describes that self-observation is important for people who have been exposed to someone with COVID-19. If you are told to self-observe, for the 14 days following exposure, do the following:

1. Practice strict respiratory etiquette and hygiene including covering your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap is not available.
2. Remain alert for fever, cough, shortness of breath, or other signs of respiratory illness.
3. If you feel feverish or develop a cough or shortness of breath:
 - Take your temperature.
 - Limit contact with others.
 - Seek health advice, but before going to a doctor's office or emergency room call ahead and tell the provider or office about your potential exposure to COVID-19 and symptoms.

RISK-RELATED CONCERNS

Are there special cleaning procedures that should be followed in response to COVID-19?

Clean any visibly dirty surfaces and then follow with a disinfectant for the prevention of COVID-19 and other viral respiratory illnesses. Public and private spaces should be routinely cleaned including all frequently touched surfaces such as desks, tables, chairs and doorknobs. No additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is recommended at this time. Use cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas and follow the directions on the label. Have disposable wipes handy so that commonly used surfaces can be wiped down before each use. For more information on household cleaning, resources from the CDC, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/home/cleaningdisinfection.html>

How should I clean if someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 has been in an area or a room? For detailed instructions on what and how to clean after a possible COVID-19 exposure, visit the CDC’s recommendations at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html>

What should healthcare personnel (HCP) do if they had a potential exposure to COVID-19?

The CDC offers [Interim U.S. Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Healthcare Personnel with Potential Exposure in a Healthcare Setting to Patients with Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\)](#). This interim guidance is intended to assist with assessment of risk, monitoring, and work restriction decisions for healthcare personnel with potential exposure to COVID-19.

KEY CONTACTS

Topic	Contact	Phone/Email
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ General Information ▪ www.nh.gov/covid19 	2-1-1 New Hampshire	1-866-444-4211 TTY: 603-634-3388
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clinical Questions 	Bureau of Infectious Disease Control	603-271-4496
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Healthcare Surge ▪ Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Supply Issues 	DHHS Emergency Services Unit	esu@dhhs.nh.gov
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work related concerns 	Your Manager or HR	603-225-4153