

# What you need to know about coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)

## What is coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel coronavirus that was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China.

## Can people in the U.S. get COVID-19?

Yes. COVID-19 is spreading from person to person in parts of the United States. Risk of infection with COVID-19 is higher for people who are close contacts of someone known to have COVID-19, for example healthcare workers, or household members. Other people at higher risk for infection are those who live in or have recently been in an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19. Learn more about places with ongoing spread at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html#geographic>.

## Have there been cases of COVID-19 in the U.S.?

Yes. The first case of COVID-19 in the United States was reported on January 21, 2020. The current count of cases of COVID-19 in the United States is available on CDC's webpage at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-in-us.html>.

## How does COVID-19 spread?

The virus that causes COVID-19 probably emerged from an animal source, but is now spreading from person to person. The virus is thought to spread mainly between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It also 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. Learn what is known about the spread of newly emerged coronaviruses at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html>.

## What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Patients with COVID-19 have had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of

- fever
- cough
- shortness of breath

## What are severe complications from this virus?

Some patients have pneumonia in both lungs, multi-organ failure and in some cases death.

## How can I help protect myself?

People can help protect themselves from respiratory illness with everyday preventive actions.

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.

## If you are sick, to keep from spreading respiratory illness to others, you should

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

## What should I do if I recently traveled from an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19?

If you have traveled from an affected area, there may be restrictions on your movements for up to 2 weeks. If you develop symptoms during that period (fever, cough, trouble breathing), seek medical advice. Call the office of your health care provider before you go, and tell them about your travel and your symptoms. They will give you instructions on how to get care without exposing other people to your illness. While sick, avoid contact with people, don't go out and delay any travel to reduce the possibility of spreading illness to others.

## Is there a vaccine?

There is currently no vaccine to protect against COVID-19. The best way to prevent infection is to take everyday preventive actions, like avoiding close contact with people who are sick and washing your hands often.

## Is there a treatment?

There is no specific antiviral treatment for COVID-19. People with COVID-19 can seek medical care to help relieve symptoms.



[cdc.gov/COVID19](https://cdc.gov/COVID19)

## COVID RESPONSE SYMPTOM MANAGEMENT PROTOCOL FOR STAFF

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**Subject/Topic:** Symptom Management Protocol for Staff during COVID-19

**Topic Category:** Clinical

**Lead:** Arlington County Public Health Division, Department of Human Services (DHS)

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**Summary:** Any staff who presents with, reports, or lives with someone with the following symptoms: cough, lower respiratory symptoms or fever, must stay home until cleared by their supervisor to return.

**Purpose:** To describe the protocol for responding to an employee who becomes ill, based on current safety guidelines from the World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control and Virginia Department of Health, regarding COVID-19 during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Scope:** This protocol applies to all staff, employees, volunteers and contractors working at DHS for the COVID-19 response.

**History/Background:** “CDC is responding to a pandemic of respiratory disease spreading from person-to-person caused by a novel (new) coronavirus. The disease has been named “coronavirus disease 2019” (abbreviated “COVID-19”). This situation poses a serious public health risk. The federal government is working closely with state, local, tribal, and territorial partners, as well as public health partners, to respond to this situation. COVID-19 can cause mild to severe illness; most severe illness occurs in older adults.” (CDC, 3/26/2020, retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/summary.html>)

### Protocol for All Staff:

#### 1. If you are well,

- a. Continue working either at home or onsite
- b. If you come to work,
  - i. Practice social distancing (keep 6-foot distances from other people)
  - ii. Practice good hygiene (wash hands frequently, avoid touching your face, cough into your elbow)

#### 2. If you are not feeling well

- a. If you have a cough, trouble breathing or fever
  - i. Stay home and self-isolate. Notify your Lead/Supervisor or Scheduling Coordinator.
  - ii. Contact your healthcare provider and follow their directions
  - iii. You may return to work if you have had no symptoms for seventy-two (72) hours AND at least 7 days have passed since your symptoms started.
- b. If you only have non-respiratory symptoms
  - i. Stay home while sick. Notify your Lead/Supervisor or Scheduling Coordinator.
  - ii. Contact your healthcare provider and follow their directions

- iii. You may return to work once you have had no symptoms for seventy-two (72) hours (without using fever reducing medications)
- 3. If your healthcare provider orders a COVID test for your symptoms,**  
Whether the results are positive or negative
  - i. Stay home and self-isolate. Notify your Lead/Supervisor or Scheduling Coordinator.
  - ii. Contact your healthcare provider and follow their directions
  - iii. you may only return to work if you have had no symptoms for seventy-two (72) hours AND you are at least 7 days away from the onset of symptoms
- 4. If you have been asked by a health professional to self-quarantine (i.e., they consider you to have been a contact to a case AND you do not have symptoms),**
  - a. Stay home for 14 days and monitor for symptoms. Notify your Lead/Supervisor or Scheduling Coordinator.
  - b. If you do not develop symptoms after 14 days, you may return to work (either at home or onsite)
  - c. If you do develop symptoms,
    - i. Stay home and self-isolate
    - ii. Contact your healthcare provider or local health department (whomever asked you to self-quarantine) and follow their directions
    - iii. You may return to work once you have had no symptoms for seventy-two (72) hours AND at least 7 days have passed since your symptoms started.
- 5. If you had contact with another person who has no symptoms AND who had direct contact with a person with COVID-19**
  - a. Being a contact of a contact of a case is not considered an exposure to COVID-19.
  - b. You may continue to work (onsite or at home) – (see #1)
- 6. If you are concerned about a co-worker or a client who appears ill**
  - a. Talk to your supervisor – let them handle the situation
  - b. Practice the behaviors outlined in #1 above.
  - c. If you are concerned that you had close contact with co-worker who went home sick, please contact the Surveillance/Investigation Branch Director.

**Authorities:**

- World Health Organization
- Centers for Disease Control
- Virginia Department of Health