

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

And SARS-CoV-2 Frequently Asked Questions

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What is COVID-19?

- * Coronavirus Disease 2019 is the name for symptoms caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.
- * SARS-CoV-2 is a:
 - * **novel** (it is new ... we have not seen it before)
 - * **coronavirus** (a family of viruses that include common cold viruses and animal viruses)
- * Because the name is confusing with SARS, the CDC is using the term "COVID-19 virus"

Is this the same as SARS?

- * SARS is a type of coronavirus. MERS and this novel coronavirus are two other types.
- * Death rate from 2003 SARS epidemic: >10% (fatality 50% over age 60)
 - * We have seen no cases of SARS since 2004 anywhere in the world thanks to WHO and CDC containment strategies.
- * SARS stands for Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
 - * Symptoms include shortness of breath.
 - * It can happen quickly.
 - * It can be life threatening.
 - * Symptoms are similar to the flu.

What about MERS?

- * The Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome outbreak in 2012:
 - * Affected 27 countries
 - * Only 2 patients in the USA ever tested positive
 - * Death rate 34%

Is COVID-19 like influenza?

- * Many of the symptoms are similar.
 - * Fever and dry cough most common symptoms.
 - * Runny noses very rare (less than 5%).
 - * Average 2 weeks to recovery in mild to moderate cases.
- * It is thought to be transmitted the same as influenza
 - * Close human to human contact
 - * Droplets in the air
 - * Droplets on surfaces

What makes COVID-19 more dangerous than influenza?

- * There are no treatments for COVID-19.
- * There are no vaccines for COVID-19.
- * Death rate of COVID-19 is 3.4%* versus 0.1% for seasonal influenza.
- * COVID-19 spreads more quickly
 - * One COVID-19 infected person infects 2-3 people on average versus 1.2 people with seasonal influenza
 - * COVID-19 spread is very similar to the 1918 flu pandemic where 1 person infected 2-3 people, and the death rate was 2.5%.

*www.cnn.com/2020/03/03/who-says-coronavirus-death-rate-is-3point4percent-globally-higher-than-previously-thought.html

Why don't we all just wear masks?

- * The average amount of times we touch our face is over 20 times per hour.
- * Touching our face is a method of transmission.
- * Only effective masks are N-95 respirators, which:
 - * Require special fitting to be effective (must be snug and in contact with the face all the way around),
 - * Are difficult to breathe through, and
 - * With adjusting due to discomfort, it increases the risk of spread.

Who is most at risk of COVID-19?

- * Those with underlying health problems appear to have an increased rate of death (up to 15% mortality).
- * Death rate is under 0.5% up to age 49, greater than 3.5% 60 years and older, over 20% over 80 years old.
- * Cancer, hypertension, chronic respiratory disease, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease increase risk of death from 5% to over 10%.
- * Mortality for men is twice that of women.

Why is incubation period a big deal with COVID-19?

- * The longer the time people have the virus without symptoms, the greater the ability of people who unknowingly have the virus to infect others.
- * Incubation period: the amount of time between exposure to an infection and appearance of first symptoms
 - * 2019 SARS CoV-2: **2-14 days (*up to 24 days)**
 - * 2012 MERS: 5 days
 - * 2003 SARS: 2-7 days
 - * 2009 H1N1 (Swine) Flu: 1-4 days
 - * Seasonal Flu: 2 days

What has China done to decrease new cases of COVID-19 successfully?*

- * Built 2 dedicated hospitals in Wuhan in just over 1 week, and more than 1800 teams of five or more people traced tens of thousands of contacts.
- * Aggressive “social distancing” measures included canceling sporting events, shuttering theaters, extending school breaks, closing businesses.
- * 53 million people placed under mandatory quarantine since January 23, 2020. (Wuhan and nearby cities in Hubei province)
- * Restrictions were enforced by AliPay and WeChat apps. Color codes on mobile phones (green, yellow, red) designated a person’s health status and allowed or disallowed travel, enforced by the military.
- * In other regions of mainland China, people voluntarily quarantined and were monitored by appointed leaders in neighborhoods.

www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/03/china-s-aggressive-measures-have-slowed-coronavirus-they-may-not-work-other-countries

What do we know works to prevent transmission?

- * Quarantine
- * “Social Distancing”
 - * Italy now closing all schools and universities for 2 weeks (over 2500 confirmed, 79 deaths)*
- * Enforcing those with symptoms of any illness remain at home.
- * Hand washing with soap
 - * >60% alcohol based hand sanitizer ONLY if no soap available
- * Using paper towels as first choice to completely dry hands

[*www.cnbc.com/2020/03/04/italys-death-toll-from-the-coronavirus-is-now-worse-than-iran.html](http://www.cnbc.com/2020/03/04/italys-death-toll-from-the-coronavirus-is-now-worse-than-iran.html)

Will warmer weather make COVID-19 disappear?

- * Short answer: we don't know yet, but probably not.*
- * Longer answer:
 - * In 2003, SARS did not go away on its own as the weather got warmer. It only went away with intense public health interventions that included isolation, quarantines, and other intensive efforts aided by a shorter incubation period with more severe cases.
 - * Seasonal viruses behave differently than viruses new to a population because no one has any immunity to the new viruses yet.

*www.ccdd.hsph.harvard.edu/will-covid-19-go-away-on-its-own-in-warmer-weather/

What do the experts think will happen?

- * >80% of COVID-19 being mild + long incubation time = greater community spread
- * Experts estimate 40-80% of the world's population will be exposed to this virus.
- * Experts feel the virus will be “with us beyond this season, beyond this year, and ... eventually the virus will find a foothold and we will get community-based transmission.”*

*www.thehill.com/changing-america/well-being/prevention-cures/482794-officials-say-the-cdc-is-preparing-for

Why isn't this being called a pandemic yet?*

- * Countries have pandemic plans that are launched when it is declared, but these plans may not be appropriate for combating the COVID-19 virus
- * CONTAINMENT (pre-pandemic): quarantine and isolation worked for SARS and the 2014-2016 Ebola outbreak. The U.S. is using this.
- * MITIGATION (pandemic protocol): “social distancing” is what China and Italy have done in cancelling events.
- * WHO feels *both* are important now, tailoring to local circumstances.
- * The success seen in China using both has been substantial according to visiting scientists in their Feb 28, 2020 report.

*www.newscientist.com/article/2235342-covid-19-why-wont-the-who-officially-declare-a-coronavirus-pandemic/

Reputable Sources for Information

- * WHO (World Health Organization)
- * CDC (Centers for Disease Control)
- * MedlinePlus from the U.S. National Library of Medicine
- * National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases
- * National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services