The way viruses spread from person to person follows many of the rules that wildflowers and weeds use to spread across a lawn or empty lot.

COVID-19 symptoms may include:
- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

How Weeds and Wildflowers Spread
Most people are familiar with weeds spreading across a lawn or empty lot. Weeds spread much more slowly than the COVID-19 virus. However, because viruses and weeds follow many of the same rules as they spread, comparing the two processes may help us understand how, why and when masks work to keep viruses from spreading.
**Day #** | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6
---|---|---|---|---|---|---
**Tail end of Person A’s Infectious Period** | | | | | | |

Person B’s Infectious Period starts 2 days before symptoms and lasts 10 days after symptoms start.

Person B can shed virus before feeling ill, just like weeds can release seeds before they are fully grown.

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**How Weeds and Wildflowers Spread**

How COVID-19 Spreads
How COVID-19 Spreads

Day # 1 2 3 4 5 6
Tail end of Person A’s Infectious Period

If without symptoms, Person B’s Infectious Period lasts 10 days from the day of the positive test

Note: Person B may have no symptoms but may still be infected and capable of transmitting disease during the infectious period.

How Weeds and Wildflowers Spread
### How COVID-19 Spreads

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Person B’s Infectious Period starts 2 days before symptoms and lasts 10 days from symptom onset.

If each weed makes enough seeds to grow more than one new weed, the weeds will spread. If one person infected with a virus infects more than one other person, the virus will spread. We call this number the “Reproduction Number.” If this number is more than one, the virus will spread just like the weeds.

### How Weeds and Wildflowers Spread

![Image of weeds spreading]
How to keep COVID-19 from spreading: Wearing a mask is part of the strategy.

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Person B Infectious Period starts 2 days before symptoms and lasts 10 days after symptoms start.

How to keep Weeds from spreading using the same strategy.
Day # | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16
--- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | ---
Tail end of Person A’s Infectious Period

Person B is not likely to be infected because she wore a mask when she was with Person A. However, even if Person B did become infected, she does not transmit infection to Person C because she wears a mask. A mask – used at all times with or without symptoms – prevents viruses from spreading just like the jar prevented seeds from spreading the weeds.

How to keep COVID-19 from spreading: Wearing a mask is part of the strategy

How to keep Weeds from spreading using the same strategy