

COVID-19: Tips for Individuals

Commonly known as corona virus

Summary:

The recent outbreak of COVID-19 from Wuhan, China has created a lot of fear, perpetuation of misinformation and in some cases panic. We've compiled a few facts and a set of tips for individuals to adhere to in these challenging times.

Full article:

What is COVID-19 i.e. The 'Coronavirus'?

Coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV).

Coronaviruses are zoonotic, meaning they are transmitted between animals and people. Detailed investigations found that SARS-CoV was transmitted from civet cats to humans and MERS-CoV from dromedary camels to humans. Currently, there are several known coronaviruses circulating in animals that have not yet infected humans.

COVID-19 is a form of coronavirus that has been transferred by animals to humans, beginning in China, and is now infectious between humans around the globe.

Symptoms

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, tiredness and dry cough, however some patients may also experience aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat or diarrhea.

The symptoms are usually mild and begin gradually, however some people may become infected but exhibit no symptoms nor feel unwell.

Around 1 out of every 6 people who get COVID-19 become seriously ill and develop difficulty breathing. Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like high blood pressure, heart problems and diabetes, are likely to develop serious illness.

How it spreads

There are essentially 3 common ways in which the virus can spread. They are as follows:

- Contact with another infected person
- Contact with droplets from an infected person's cough or sneeze
- Touching objects or surfaces (like doorknobs and tables) that have these droplets on them, and then touching your mouth, nose, eyes or other parts of your face

Prevention

Practice the following 4 tips in order to minimise your chances of contracting the virus:

- Avoid contact with sick people, and disinfect surfaces they touch before use
- Practising good hygiene including washing hands often and covering your mouth or nose when coughing or sneezing
- Avoiding close contact with people more generally
- The use of face masks is not proven to decrease chances of transmission to you, only from you to others – there is no need to wear one if you are healthy

Treatment

There is currently no vaccine against COVID-19 and no treatment specifically for it. However, there are steps you can take:

- Resting and avoiding overexertion
- Drinking enough water
- Avoiding smoking and smokey areas
- Taking Acetaminophen, Ibuprofen, or Naproxen for pain and fever

What to do if you believe you have COVID-19?

Due the symptoms of COVID-19 being very similar to the symptoms of the common cold and flu, it can be difficult to discern whether you have contracted the virus. Here is a list of steps to take if you believe there is a chance you may have become infected.

1. Book an appointment with your local doctor, and wear a mask to prevent other patients from being exposed.
2. Your doctor will organise for a test to be supplied, which you will take.
3. Upon receiving the test results (up to a few days), if it is positive you will be instructed (and enforced) to remain in your home until told it is safe for you to leave – roughly the length of your symptoms plus an additional day.
4. You must remain “Isolated” within your home. This entails the following: no visitors, no leaving (unless for a medical emergency), have others bring you food and supplies unless there is absolutely no way you can, and remove yourself from your family or living partners wherever possible.
5. Be sure to manage your own health and safety of those around you as the top priority, but let your employer know of the situation and discuss further action regarding work only once the immediate health concern is alleviated.

FAQs

How long is the incubation period?

Many governments around the world use a ‘14-day incubation period’ model – that is, if you have had contact or potential contact with the virus but after 14 days show no symptoms, you are treated as not having contracted it, and thus non-infectious to those around you.

A study published on March 10th 2020 in Annals of Internal Medicine titled ‘The Incubation Period of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) From Publicly Reported Confirmed Cases: Estimation and Application’, outlined that the median incubation period is 5 days, and that 97.5% of people who develop symptoms do so within 11.5 days.

The study warns that while the 14-day model is appropriate, statistically with large sample sizes many cases may be presumed non-infectious but go on to develop symptoms after the 14-day period has concluded.

How long does the virus survive on surfaces?

A study by the U.S. Government published on March 10th 2020 titled ‘Aerosol and surface stability of HCoV-19 (SARS-CoV-2) compared to SARS-CoV-1’ has concluded that the virus survives up to three hours in the air (aerosolised) up to four hours on copper, up to 24 hours on cardboard and up to 2-3 days on plastic or stainless steel.

How long will I have it?

Healthier people could be over it within a couple of days, whereas for unhealthier people it could last weeks or even be fatal.

Is it safe to receive a package from an affected area?

Yes. The likelihood of infection via a package that has travelled worldwide is low – if from closer, there could be greater potential.

Can it be transferred before symptoms appear?

It can be transferred before symptoms appear, however the main way the virus spreads is through symptomatic carriers who expel the virus via cough or sneeze.