



**Work Life Services Newsletter May 2020**  
**Call our toll-free number 1-800-364-6352 for assistance**

## **Coronavirus COVID-19 Pandemic**

According to the health and medical professionals overseeing the United States' response to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, we are entering a period of profound difficulty as a nation. All citizens have been asked to mentally prepare for the hardships that we will face in our continued fight against this illness and to follow the recommendations put in place to keep everyone as emotionally and physically healthy as possible.

**1.** As COVID-19 is highly contagious and can be spread from person to person through close contact, including conversations between people, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recommended that all Americans wear a protective face covering when leaving the home. While N-95 masks and other personal protective equipment (PPE) should be reserved for first responders and care professionals, if you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or unaware that you are infected, face masks, bandanas, and homemade coverings can help provide some protection and assist with not spreading the illness.

**2.** Social distancing remains one of the most effective methods for preventing the spread of COVID-19. Any person can contract and spread COVID-19, and some infected may show no signs or symptoms of a COVID-19 infection. Because of this, changing your lifestyle to limit your exposure to others is critical to help prevent becoming infected and potentially infecting others. This is a challenging time for everyone. Being supportive of community efforts to keep citizens at home and separated may be the difference between life and death for someone else, including someone close to you.

**3.** Wash your hands! You may not realize how often you touch door handles, your phone, your keys, and even your face. Every time you leave your home, you need to wash your hands. Every time you encounter someone else, you need to wash your hands. Combining proper hand-washing routines with social distancing will help to reduce the chances that you bring COVID-19 into your home and infect yourself or others.

With schools closing for the remainder of the academic year, employees being asked to work remotely or being laid off, and challenges with keeping your family at home for extended periods of time developing every day, we understand that this emergency has many Americans feeling uncertain and anxious about what to do and how to respond. We are here to help you find the support you need to cope with the stress that may develop during this emergency and we have the resources available to help you create a plan of action that will assist you and everyone in your care with getting through this experience.

In this special resource section, you'll learn about coronaviruses, find resources related to the current spread of the illness, and discover the steps you should take to prepare your family for the daily living challenges that may arise as the virus spreads to your local community. From caring for children in isolation and adjusting to remote work from home to how to find remote employment and properly seek medical attention to treat the illness, these resources will help you take charge of your situation.

As always, you should follow the guidelines and information provided by the agencies responsible for monitoring and responding to concerns of this nature. Trusting your family's health and wellbeing to untrusted sources of information may unnecessarily aggravate concerns or worry younger family members who do not have a full understanding of the situation.

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

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness. It's caused by a new (novel) coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2. There are many types of coronavirus. Coronaviruses are a very common cause of bronchitis. They may sometimes cause lung infection (pneumonia). Symptoms can range from mild to severe respiratory illness. These viruses are also found in some animals. COVID-19 was first found in people in Wuhan, China, in late 2019. COVID-19 is a rapidly emerging infectious disease. This means that scientists are actively researching it. There are information updates regularly. Visit the [CDC website](#) for the latest information. Or call 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636).

### **What causes coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)?**

Public health officials are working to find the source. How the virus spreads is not yet fully understood, but it seems to spread and infect people fairly easily. Some people who have been infected in an area may be unsure how or where they became infected. The virus may be spread through droplets of fluid that a person coughs or sneezes into the air. It may be spread if you touch a surface with virus on it, such as a handle or object, and then touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.

### **Who is at risk for coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)?**

You are at risk for infection if you've been to a place where people have been sick with this virus. You are at risk if you:

- Recently traveled to an area with a COVID-19 outbreak
- Had contact with a person who was diagnosed with or who may have COVID-19
- Had contact with a sick person who recently traveled to an area with a COVID-19 outbreak

### **What are the symptoms of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)?**

Some people have no symptoms or mild symptoms. Symptoms may appear 2 to 14 days after contact with the virus. Symptoms can include:

- Fever
- Coughing
- Trouble breathing

The symptoms of COVID-19 can be like other health conditions. Make sure to see your healthcare provider for a diagnosis.

### **How is coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) diagnosed?**

Your healthcare provider will look at the risk for COVID in your community and will ask about your symptoms. He or she will also ask about your recent travel and contact with sick people. If your healthcare provider thinks you may have the COVID-19 virus, he or she will work closely with your local health department. Follow all instructions from your healthcare provider. COVID-19 is diagnosed by:

- Nose and throat swab. A cotton-tipped swab is wiped inside your nose or throat. This is done to check for viruses in your nasal mucus.
- Sputum culture. A small sample of mucus coughed from your lungs (sputum) is collected if you have a cough. It is checked for the virus.

### **How is coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) treated?**

There is currently no medicine to treat the virus. Treatment is done to help your body while it fights the virus. This is known as supportive care. Supportive care may include:

- Pain medicine. These include acetaminophen and ibuprofen. They are used to help ease pain and reduce fever.
- Bed rest. This helps your body fight the illness.

For severe illness, you may need to stay in the hospital. Care during severe illness may include:

- IV (intravenous) fluids. These are given through a vein to help keep your body hydrated.
- Oxygen. Supplemental oxygen or ventilation with a breathing machine (ventilator) may be given. This is done so you get enough oxygen in your body.

### **What are possible complications of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)?**

In many cases, this virus can cause infection (pneumonia) in both lungs. In some cases, this can cause death, especially in older adults and people who have serious health conditions such as heart or lung disease or diabetes.

### **What can I do to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)?**

There is no vaccine yet. The best prevention is to not have contact with the virus. The CDC advises that people should not travel to areas with COVID-19 outbreaks right now for any reason that is not urgent. For the most current CDC travel advisories, visit the [CDC website](#).

Prepare and protect yourself from COVID-19:

- Wash your hands often with soap and clean, running water for at least 20 seconds.
- If you don't have access to soap and water, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer often. Make sure it has at least 60% alcohol.
- Don't touch your eyes, nose, or mouth unless you have clean hands.
- As much as possible, don't touch "high-touch" public surfaces such as doorknobs. Don't shake hands.
- Clean home and work surfaces often with disinfectant.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue, then throw the tissue into the trash. If you don't have tissues, cough or sneeze into the bend of your elbow.
- Stay away from people who are sick.
- Stay informed about COVID-19 in your area. Follow local instructions about being in public. Be aware of events in your community that may be postponed or canceled, such as school and sporting events. You may be advised to not attend public gatherings and to stay about 6 feet from others as much as possible. This is called "social distancing."
- Check your home supplies. Consider keeping a 2-week supply of medicines, food, and other needed household items.
- Make a plan for childcare, work, and ways to stay in touch with others. Know who will help you if you get sick.
- Experts don't know if animals spread SARS-CoV-2. But it's always a good idea to wash your hands after touching any animals. Don't touch animals that may be sick.
- Don't share eating or drinking utensils with sick people.
- Don't kiss someone who is sick.
- Clean surfaces often with disinfectant.

If you were in an area with COVID-19 in the last 14 days:

- Call your healthcare provider. He or she can talk with local health staff to see what action may be needed. Your activities and where you go may be restricted for up to 2 weeks.
- Follow all instructions from your provider.
- Take your temperature every morning and evening for at least 14 days. This is to check for fever. Keep a record of the readings.
- Keep watch for symptoms of the virus. Tell your provider right away if you have symptoms.
- Stay home if you are sick for any reason.

If you are sick with COVID-19 symptoms:

- Stay home. Call your healthcare provider and tell them you have symptoms of COVID-19. Do this before going to any hospital or clinic. Follow your provider's instructions. You may be advised to isolate yourself at home. This is called self-isolation or self-quarantine.
- Don't panic. Keep in mind that other illnesses can cause similar symptoms.
- Stay away from work, school, and public places. Limit physical contact with family members. Don't kiss anyone or share eating or drinking utensils. Clean surfaces you touch with disinfectant. This is to help prevent the virus from spreading.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue, then throw the tissue into the trash. If you don't have tissues, cough or sneeze into the bend of your elbow.
- Stay away from other people in your home.
- Wear a facemask. This is to protect other people from your germs. If you are not able to wear a mask, your caregivers should.
- If you need to go into a hospital or clinic, expect that the healthcare staff will wear protective equipment such as masks, gowns, gloves, and eye protection. You may be put in a separate room. This is to prevent the possible virus from spreading.
- Tell the healthcare staff about recent travel. This includes local travel on public transport. Staff may need to find other people you have been in contact with.
- Follow all instructions the healthcare staff give you.

#### **How to manage coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)**

If you've been diagnosed with COVID-19:

- Stay home. Don't leave your home unless you need to get medical care. Don't go to work, school, or public areas. Don't use public transportation or taxis.
- Follow all instructions from your healthcare provider. Call your healthcare provider's office before going in. They can prepare and give you instructions. This will help prevent the virus from spreading.
- Stay away from other people in your home.
- Wear a facemask. This is to protect other people from your germs. If you are not able to wear a mask, your caregivers should.
- Don't share household items or food.
- Cover your face with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue away. Then wash your hands.
- Wash your hands often.

If you are caring for a sick person:

- Follow all instructions from healthcare staff.
- Wash your hands often.
- Wear protective clothing as advised.
- Make sure the sick person wears a mask. If they can't wear a mask, don't stay in the same room with the person. If you must be in the room, wear a facemask.
- Keep track of the sick person's symptoms.
- Clean surfaces, fabrics, and laundry thoroughly.
- Keep other people and pets away from the sick person.

## **When should I call my healthcare provider?**

Call your healthcare provider:

- If you've recently traveled or have been in an area with COVID-19 and have symptoms
- If you have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and your symptoms are worse

## **Key points about coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)**

- Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness. COVID-19 was first found in people in Wuhan, China, in late 2019. In 2020, several cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed in the U.S.
- It is caused by a new (novel) type of coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2. The virus may be spread through droplets of fluid that a person coughs or sneezes into the air. It may be spread if you touch a surface with virus on it, such as a handle or object, and then touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- If you've been to a place where people have been sick with this virus, you are at risk for infection.
- The best way to prevent COVID-19 is to not be exposed to the virus. Wash your hands often, practice social distancing, stay away from large crowds, and stay informed about COVID-19 in your area. Don't do any unnecessary travel.
- Symptoms can include fever, coughing, and trouble breathing. In some cases, this virus can cause lung infection (pneumonia).
- There is currently no medicine to treat the virus. If you have COVID-19, treatment is done to help your body while it fights the virus. This is known as supportive care.
- If you were in an area with COVID-19 and have a fever or other symptoms, stay away from other people. Call your healthcare provider. Explain that you have been exposed to COVID-19 and have symptoms. Do this before going to any hospital or clinic. Wait for instructions.
- If your healthcare provider thinks you may have COVID-19, he or she will work closely with your local health department. Follow all instructions from your healthcare provider.

## **Next steps**

Tips to help you get the most from a visit to your healthcare provider:

- Know the reason for your visit and what you want to happen.
- Before your visit, write down questions you want answered.
- Bring someone with you to help you ask questions and remember what your provider tells you.
- At the visit, write down the name of a new diagnosis, and any new medicines, treatments, or tests. Also write down any new instructions your provider gives you.
- Know why a new medicine or treatment is prescribed, and how it will help you. Also know what the side effects are.
- Ask if your condition can be treated in other ways.
- Know why a test or procedure is recommended and what the results could mean.
- Know what to expect if you do not take the medicine or have the test or procedure.
- If you have a follow-up appointment, write down the date, time, and purpose for that visit.
- Know how you can contact your provider if you have questions.