Coronavirus: Key Facts to Know

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With all the information swirling around about coronavirus, it’s important to understand the facts. Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness caused by a new virus. It was first found in people in Wuhan, China, in late 2019, and has now been detected in more than 100 locations around the world, including the U.S. The latest information can be found at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov.

What Are the Symptoms?

There are actually many types of coronavirus. Most people experience these viruses at some point in their lives. Common coronaviruses usually cause mild to moderate respiratory illnesses, such as the common cold.

Symptoms of COVID-19 can appear up to 14 days after contact with the virus and 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

Some people have no symptoms or only mild symptoms. However, COVID-19 can cause severe illness such a pneumonia, leading to death in some cases.

Am I At Risk?

If you’ve been to a place where people have been sick with this virus, you are at risk for infection. Call your health care provider if you’ve been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19 and you have symptoms. Call, too, if you develop symptoms and you live in or have recently traveled from an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19.

There is currently no specific medicine to treat COVID-19. Supportive treatment of severe cases may require treatment with IV fluids and oxygen.

Preventing Respiratory Illnesses

COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly from person to person, between people who are within about 6 feet from each other, through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, sings, talks, or breathes.

The best prevention is to not have contact with COVID-19. Follow these steps, which will also help protect you from colds and flu:

* Wash your hands often. If soap and water aren’t available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
* Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
* Don’t have close contact with people who are sick.
* Stay away from crowded indoor spaces.
* Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.

If you aren’t fully vaccinated, the CDC recommends wearing face masks and social distancing in indoor public settings. Also, remember to bring a mask whenever you’ll be outside. Even though you don’t need to wear it if you’re by yourself, with people from your household, or around fully vaccinated friends, you should put it on if you come across a crowded area and can’t stay 6 feet away from others.

Select face masks that have two or more layers of washable, breathable fabric. Do not use surgical masks or N-95 respirators. These critical supplies must be reserved for health care workers.

For a list of face mask do’s and don’ts, visit **www.cdc.gov** and search for “Your Guide to Masks.”

Getting Back to ‘Normal’

What happens after you get vaccinated? Can you stop wearing masks and social distancing? For the most part, yes! If you’re fully vaccinated, you only need to wear a mask or social distance when it’s required by federal, state, or local rules. Essentially, you can get back to activities you had stopped doing because of the pandemic.

According to the CDC, you’re considered fully vaccinated:

* Two weeks after your second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines
* Two weeks after your Johnson & Johnson vaccine