COVID-19: Disease Basics What You Need to Know
Updated March 6, 2020

Q: What is 2019 Novel Coronavirus?

A: The 2019 Novel Coronavirus, or COVID-19, is a new respiratory virus first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China. Coronaviruses affect the respiratory system, including the lungs and airways.

Q: How does the virus spread?

A: If a person who has the virus sneezes or coughs and droplets enter the environment, others in close proximity can become infected. It's not known how easily the virus spreads.

Q: Who is at risk for catching this new virus?

A: Travelers to areas with outbreaks of the virus are at greatest risk of becoming infected. U.S. residents who have traveled to Wuhan and possibly other parts of China, or who have close contact with someone who is infected are at greatest risk of infection. Although most cases outside of China are travel-related, community spread of the virus is now being detected in a growing number of countries. Visit the CDC website to find the latest travel information: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has reported "community spread" of the virus that causes COVID-19 in the United States. Community spread means that some people have been infected and it is not known how or where they became exposed.

Q. What are the symptoms?

A: Symptoms can range from mild to severe. Mild symptoms include runny nose, cough, sore throat, fever, and shortness of breath. Severe infections can cause pneumonia, kidney failure and death. It can take from two days to 14 days for an infected person to show symptoms (after exposure) but an infected person can spread the virus even before they show symptoms.

Q: How is it diagnosed?

A: Laboratory tests of patient specimens from the nose and throat can confirm a person is infected. If someone believes they should be tested for COVID-19, they should contact their healthcare provider.

Q. What is the treatment?

A: There is no vaccine to prevent infection, nor is there specific medication to cure a person of the virus. Patients are provided supportive care to relieve symptoms.

Q: Why are some travelers being quarantined?

A: On January 31 the U.S. declared the outbreak a public health emergency. At 5 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 2, the U.S. enacted stricter restrictions on travelers from China and announced that travelers who have been to Hubei Province in China in the previous 14 days are subject to a mandatory 14 day quarantine. The quarantines are a way to identify folks who might be infected but not yet showing symptoms. While it is unclear how this situation will evolve in the U.S., CDC is preparing as if it were the next pandemic.

Q: What should I do if I think I may be sick with coronavirus infection?

A: Contact your health care provider or local emergency health care facility. If you meet certain criteria for travel and symptoms, you may need to be assessed more thoroughly. Call before going to an office, hospital or clinic, if possible. You may be asked to wear a mask at the facility.

Q: What if I develop symptoms?

If you have traveled to China or have had contact with someone known to have COVID-19 and develop symptoms such as fever, cough, and difficulty breathing and shortness of breath, take the following actions:

• Seek medical care right away. If you can, please *call* your doctor or emergency room before seeking care and tell them about your travel or close contacts, and your symptoms.

• Avoid contact with others.

• Avoid travel while sick.

Q: Should I be tested for 2019-nCoV?

A: Your healthcare professional will work with your state or local public health department and CDC to determine if you need to be tested for COVID-19.

Q: Should I get tested for coronavirus?

A: If you think you need to be tested for coronavirus, you should call your healthcare provider. Do not go to your local health department for testing. Your healthcare provider will consult with the local health department to see if testing is necessary. Test kits are very limited and there are certain criteria set by the CDC that local health departments will use to determine if you need to be tested for COVID-19.

Q: Where can I get tested for COVID-19?

A: You should call your healthcare provider if you think you need to be tested and they will evaluate you to see if you need to be tested.

Q: How can I protect myself and my family?

• Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer only if soap and water are not available.

• Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth as much as possible.

• Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve (not hands) when coughing or sneezing.

• Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

• Stay home when you are sick.

• Avoid contact with sick people as much as possible.

• Avoid non-essential travel.

• CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19. Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is also crucial for health workers and people who are taking care of someone in close settings (at home or in a health care facility).

• Stay up to date with the latest information. Visit www.VDH.virginia.gov/coronavirus.

Q: Should I wear a facemask to prevent COVID-19?

A: Wearing a facemask is *not* recommended for people who are well to protect themselves from respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19. Only wear a mask if a healthcare professional recommends it. A facemask should be used by people who have COVID-19 and are showing symptoms. This is to protect others from the risk of getting infected. The use of facemasks also is crucial for health workers and other people who are taking care of someone infected with COVID-19 in close settings (at home or in a health care facility).

A: What are the most up-to-date and reliable sources of coronavirus information?

Q: For those with access to the internet, the best sources of up-to-date information are the Virginia Department of Health website (http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/). People with questions about COVID-19 can also call the Virginia Department of Health's hotline by dialing 211.