



Coronavirus disease (COVID-19)-



World Health
Organization

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Most people infected with the virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. However, some will become seriously ill and require medical attention. Older people and those with underlying medical conditions like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, or cancer are more likely to develop serious illness. Anyone can get sick with COVID-19 and become seriously ill or die at any age.

The best way to prevent and slow down transmission is to be well informed about the disease and how the virus spreads. Protect yourself and others from infection by staying at least 1 meter apart from others, wearing a properly fitted mask, and washing your hands or using an alcohol-based rub frequently. Get vaccinated when it's your turn and follow local guidance.

The virus can spread from an infected person's mouth or nose in small liquid particles when they cough, sneeze, speak, sing or breathe. These particles range from larger respiratory droplets to smaller aerosols. It is important to practice respiratory etiquette, for example by coughing into a flexed elbow, and to stay home and self-isolate until you recover if you feel unwell.

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are

fever

chills

sore throat.

Other symptoms that are less common and may affect some patients include:

muscle aches

severe fatigue or tiredness

runny or blocked nose, or sneezing

headache

sore eyes

dizziness

new and persistent cough

tight chest or chest pain

shortness of breath

hoarse voice

heavy arms/legs

numbness/tingling

nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain/ belly ache, or diarrhoea

appetite loss

loss or change of sense of taste or smell

difficulty sleeping.

Symptoms of severe COVID-19 disease which need immediate medical attention include:

difficulty in breathing, especially at rest, or unable to speak in sentences

confusion

drowsiness or loss of consciousness

persistent pain or pressure in the chest

skin being cold or clammy, or turning pale or a bluish colour

loss of speech or movement.

If possible, call your health care provider, hotline or health facility first, so you can be directed to the right clinic.

People who have pre-existing health problems are at higher risk when they have COVID-19; they should seek medical help early if worried about their condition. These include but are not limited to: those taking immunosuppressive medication; those with chronic heart, lung, liver or rheumatological problems; those with HIV, diabetes, cancer or dementia.

Who is most at risk of severe illness from COVID-19?

People aged 60 years and over, and those with underlying medical problems like high blood pressure, diabetes, other chronic health problems (for example those affecting the heart, lungs, kidneys, and brain), low immune function / immunosuppression (including HIV), obesity, cancer, and unvaccinated people are most at risk of severe illness.

However, anyone at any age can get sick with COVID-19 and become seriously ill or die.

What should I do if I have COVID-19 symptoms?

- If you are unwell, stay at home.
- If you have any symptoms suggestive of COVID-19, wear a mask when interacting with others in or outside of your household or sharing space with others. If you have shortness of breath or pain or pressure in the chest, seek medical attention at a health facility immediately. Call your health care provider or hotline in advance for direction to the right health facility.
- Get tested for COVID-19, regardless of your vaccination status, and especially if you are at high-risk for severe illness and could therefore be eligible for drug treatments.
- Practice protective and preventive measures. Wear a mask, avoid crowded and poorly ventilated areas, improve ventilation in indoor spaces, keep a distance, practice hand hygiene, and respiratory etiquette (covering your mouth and nose with a bent elbow or a tissue when you cough or sneeze), get vaccinated and stay up to date with booster doses.

What test should I get to see if I have COVID-19?

There are two main types of tests that can confirm whether you are infected with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Molecular tests, such as polymerase chain reaction (PCR), are the most accurate tests for diagnosing SARS-CoV-2 infection. Molecular tests detect virus in the sample by amplifying viral genetic material to detectable levels. Rapid antigen tests (sometimes known as rapid diagnostic tests or RDTs) detect viral proteins (known as antigens). RDTs are a simpler and faster option than molecular tests and are available for testing by trained operators or by the individual themselves (sometimes called self-tests). They perform best when there is more virus circulating in the community and when sampled from an individual during the time they are most infectious, generally within the first 5–7 days following symptom onset. Samples for both types of tests are collected from the nose and/or throat with a swab.

Is there a vaccine for COVID-19?

Yes. There are several COVID-19 vaccines validated for use by WHO (given Emergency Use Listing) and from other stringent national regulatory agencies (SRAs). The first mass vaccination program started in early December 2020 and the number of vaccination doses administered is updated on a regular basis [here](#). For more information on vaccine for COVID-19, see the vaccine questions and answers: [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\): Vaccines \(who.int\)](#)

[Coronavirus \(who.int\)](#)

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