



COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus)

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a new virus that causes respiratory illness in people and can spread from person-to-person. This virus was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China.

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that can cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to more serious respiratory infections like bronchitis, pneumonia or severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS).

How is it spread?

Much is unknown about how COVID-19 spreads. Current knowledge is largely based on what is known about similar coronaviruses. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in many different species of animals including camels, cattle, cats and bats. Rarely, animal coronaviruses can infect people and then spread between people such as with SARS and now with COVID-19.

Most often, spread from person-to-person happens among close contacts (about 6 feet). Person-to-person spread is thought to occur mainly via respiratory droplets made when an infected person coughs or sneezes, similar to how influenza and other respiratory pathogens spread.

Your risk of severe diseases may be higher if you have a weakened immune system. This may be the case for:

- Older people
- People with chronic diseases (for example: diabetes, high blood pressure, heart, liver or chronic lung disease).

Have there been cases of COVID-19 in Canada?

Yes. The first infection with COVID-19 in Canada was reported on January 25, 2020.

What symptoms should I watch for?

Symptoms range from mild like flu and other common respiratory infections to severe illness, and can include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Difficulty breathing

Complications can include serious conditions like pneumonia or kidney failure, and in some cases, death.

What is the treatment for COVID-19?

There are no specific treatments for coronavirus, and there is no vaccine that protects against coronavirus. Most people with common human coronavirus illnesses will recover on their own.

How can I avoid getting sick from respiratory illnesses including COVID-19?

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers
- Sneeze and cough into your sleeve
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- Stay home if you are sick
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces

What if I have recently travelled?

[Self-isolate](#) for 14 days upon returning to Canada. People who are self-isolating should not go to work.

If you develop symptoms (fever, cough, difficulty breathing) you should remain isolated for 14 days or until 24 hours after symptoms resolve. If your symptoms worsen, you should seek assessment with your health care provider, assessment centre or emergency department.

Are there risks for pregnancy or breastfeeding?

There is little known about COVID-19 and the potential risk to babies [during pregnancy](#) and during delivery. It is known that during pregnancy a woman's immune system changes, and they may be more susceptible to infections in general. If you are pregnant, follow the general recommendations listed below and consult your health care provider for advice, as needed.

Breastfeeding is recommended during most illnesses and little is known about possible risks of [COVID-19 and breastfeeding](#). At the moment there is no evidence that the virus can be carried in breastmilk, so it is felt the benefits of breastfeeding outweigh any potential risks of transmission of coronavirus through breastmilk. Take precautions to protect yourself and your baby and always wash your hands before touching your baby, such as when feeding. If you develop symptoms, the decision whether to start or continue breastfeeding should be discussed with your healthcare provider.