

# 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

COVID-19, discovered in December 2019, has now spread throughout the world. While there is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19, doctors and researchers are learning more about it every day.

Here's what we know now and how you can protect your family and others.

## Symptoms of COVID-19

Symptoms of COVID-19 can range from mild to severe. They generally begin 2-14 days after being exposed to the virus and often include cough and shortness of breath. At least two of these symptoms can also suggest a person has COVID-19: fever, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, and a new loss of taste or smell.

Although COVID-19 is a new disease, it belongs to a family of coronaviruses that usually cause illnesses like the common cold. As the virus spreads, we are seeing many people with mild symptoms, but others who get very sick and need to be cared for in a hospital. Although most people recover, many have died. The reason health officials are concerned is because the virus is new, which makes it hard to predict how it will continue to affect people.

## Who is most at risk?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), children do not seem to be at higher risk for getting COVID-19. However, some people are, including

- Older adults
- People who have serious chronic medical conditions like:
  - Heart disease
  - Diabetes
  - Lung disease
  - Suppressed immune systems

## Does COVID-19 affect children the same way as adults?

Early research suggests that fewer children than adults with COVID-19 get a fever, cough, or shortness of breath. Few children with COVID-19 have had to be hospitalized. However, severe illness has been reported in children, most often in infants less than a year.

## How to protect your family

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19, but there are a few things you can do to keep your family healthy:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer. Look for one that is 60% or higher alcohol-based. Avoid making your own hand sanitizer. If made incorrectly, it can burn the skin.
- Reduce close contact with others by practicing physical or "social distancing." This means staying home as much as possible and avoiding groups. If you do need to run an essential errand like going to the grocery store or pharmacy for your family, the CDC recommends wearing a cloth face covering.
- Teach kids to cough and sneeze into a tissue (make sure to throw it away after each use!) or to cough and sneeze into their arm or elbow, not their hands.

- Clean and disinfect your home as usual using regular household cleaning sprays or wipes.
- Wash stuffed animals or other plush toys, following manufacturer's instructions in the warmest water possible and dry them completely.
- Avoid touching your face; teach your children to do the same.
- Follow local and state guidance on travel and stay at home restrictions.

If your child has been exposed to COVID-19, or you are concerned about your child's symptoms, call your pediatrician immediately.

## How to care for someone in your family with COVID-19

People who are mildly ill with COVID-19 are usually able to isolate at home during their illness. However, it may be recommended to take these additional steps:

- **Separate family members with COVID-19 from others as much as possible.** The person with the virus should stay in a specific room and away from other people in your home. Ideally, they should use a separate bathroom, if available. Limit visitors in the house.
- **Avoid contact with pets.** This includes petting, snuggling, being kissed or licked, and sharing food.
- **Call ahead before visiting the doctor.** This will help them take steps to keep other people from getting infected or exposed.
- **Avoid sharing personal household items.** Don't share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people or pets in the home. After using these items, they should be washed thoroughly with soap and water.
- **Extra cleaning for all "high-touch" surfaces.** These include counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables. Also, clean any surfaces that may have blood, stool, or body fluids on them. Use a household cleaning spray or wipes and follow the instructions on the label.
- **Monitor symptoms.** Call your doctor or health department right away if the illness gets worse.

**NOTE:** The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) agrees with the World Health Organization about the use of ibuprofen during the COVID-19 pandemic. Right now, there is not enough evidence to recommend you avoid using ibuprofen, unless you have an underlying medical condition that makes ibuprofen less safe. Using acetaminophen is a reasonable and safe option. In children, the goal should be to improve their overall comfort, monitor their activity, look for signs of serious illness, and make sure they drink enough liquids.

The AAP recommends parents talk with their child's pediatrician about the correct dose before using any medication. Use a medication syringe or dropper to measure the correct amount because they are more reliable than a measuring spoon.

## Dealing with school and child care closings

In many communities, schools and child care centers are temporarily closed to help slow the spread of the virus. If your children need to stay at home due to the outbreak, see *Working and Learning from Home During the COVID-19 Outbreak* for tips on balancing schooling, working, media time and more.

## Talking to children about COVID-19

There's a lot of news coverage about the outbreak of COVID-19 and it can be overwhelming for parents and frightening to kids. The AAP encourages parents and others who work closely with children to filter information and talk about it in a way that their child can understand.

These tips can help:

- **Simple reassurance.** Remind children that researchers and doctors are learning as much as they can, as quickly as they can, about the virus and are taking steps to keep everyone safe.
- **Give them control.** It's also a great time to remind your children of what they can do to help – washing their hands often, coughing into a tissue or their sleeves, and getting enough sleep.
- **Watch for signs of anxiety.** Children may not have the words to express their worry, but you may see signs of it. They may get cranky, be more clingy, have trouble sleeping, or seem distracted. Keep the reassurance going and try to stick to your normal routines.
- **Monitor their media.** Keep young children away from frightening images they may see on TV, social media, computers, etc. For older children, talk together about what they are hearing on the news and correct any misinformation or rumors you may hear.

- **Be a good role model.** COVID-19 doesn't discriminate and neither should we. While COVID-19 started in Wuhan, China, it doesn't mean that having Asian ancestry – or any other ancestry – makes someone more susceptible to the virus or more contagious. Stigma and discrimination hurt everyone by creating fear or anger towards others. When you show empathy and support to those who are ill, your children will too.

## Stay informed

Families are encouraged to stay up to date about this situation as we learn more about how to prevent this virus from spreading in homes and in communities.

For more parenting information from the AAP, visit [www.HealthyChildren.org](http://www.HealthyChildren.org).

For the latest developments from the CDC, including travel warnings, new cases, and prevention advice, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

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