

Facts about COVID-19 and Other Viruses

20% of all common “colds” are Corona viruses.

Symptoms for COVID-19 are respiratory in nature and can include fever, coughing, sneezing, and chest congestion. Symptoms usually occur 2-14 days after exposure. Flu symptoms are similar but often include muscle and joint aches.

Who is at risk? Older adults and people with compromised immune systems or chronic diseases are most at risk. COVID-19 is more contagious than the flu and less contagious than the measles.

How is COVID-19 transmitted? COVID-19 is primarily transmitted through cough or sneeze droplets, just as influenza and the common cold. The amount of time the virus can survive on hard surfaces is unknown, but is thought to be hours to days. Transmission of this virus from hard surfaces has not been proven at this time.

What should I do to protect myself?

The best practices for preventing the spread of most viruses are to **wash your hands** regularly, cover your sneezes and coughs, and avoid touching your mouth, nose, and eyes with your hands. Regularly clean hard surfaces such as door knobs, counter tops, and shopping cart handles, as well as work spaces such as office desks, telephones, and computers. These precautions are part of good health hygiene at all times.

Are masks helpful? Both the World Health Organization and the Center for Disease Control advise that “well” people do *not* need to wear face masks. Furthermore, the rising demand for healthcare supplies due to the breadth of this global concern has resulted in a shortage of critical supplies (such as medical masks), especially for healthcare professionals who are particularly vulnerable. Again, both the WHO and CDC recommend that mask usage be prioritized for trained health care professional who are working in close proximity to the sick and to the sick for whom a mask will limit transmission to care providers. Always cover your cough with a tissue!