

## **COVID-19 FAQs**

### **Q: What is COVID-19?**

**A:** There are [many types](#) of human coronaviruses including some that commonly cause mild upper-respiratory tract illnesses. COVID-19 is a new disease, caused by a novel (or new) coronavirus that has not previously been seen in humans. COVID-19 is a viral respiratory illness that can spread from person-to-person. It's a novel coronavirus that was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in China.

### **Q: How does COVID-19 spread?**

**A:** The virus seems to spread easily and sustainably in the community, "community spread", infection happens through close contact between people and by droplets from coughs or sneezes. It also spreads when a person touches a surface with the virus on it, and then touches his or her nose, mouth or eyes.

Learn more [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#anchor\\_1584386553767](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#anchor_1584386553767)

### **Q: What are the symptoms of COVID-19?**

**A:** The symptoms are:

- Cough
- Fever
- Shortness of breath

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states people may show symptoms of COVID-19 within two to 14 days after exposure. For more information, see the CDC website at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/summary.html>.

### **Q: How severe is the COVID-19 illness?**

**A:** Reported illnesses range from very mild (with no reported symptoms) to severe, including some deaths. Adults 65 years and older and anyone with severe underlying health problems, such as compromised immune systems, existing respiratory problems, diabetes, heart disease or lung disease, are at a higher risk of developing severe illness from COVID-19. Here is a video to watch. <https://youtu.be/TjcoN9Aek24>

### **Q: How do I know if I could have COVID-19?**

**A:** You may have COVID-19 if you:

- Came in contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19, or
  - You or someone you came in contact with traveled to an area where the infection is sustained or widespread. (See the CDC country list at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>)

**AND**

- You now have a fever, cough and/or have difficulty breathing.

**Q: What should I do if I have been exposed or have symptoms of COVID-19?**

**A:** First, don't just walk into your military or civilian clinic or hospital. Speak to a Registered Nurse or office staff member in advance. That person will assess your symptoms and advise you on what to do. You may:

- Call your military or civilian primary care clinic directly
- Send your primary care physician a secure online message, if you can do so.

**Q: What happens after I speak to a nurse or office staff member?**

**A:** The nurse or staff member decides whether your symptoms may be due to COVID-19 or another illness requiring treatment. You might get advice on self-care since symptoms often can be treated at home.

The nurse/staff member may arrange a telephone visit between you and a healthcare provider or tell you to call your provider directly. The provider can talk with you about possible exposure, your symptoms, and discusses treatment. The provider may give you self-care advice to use at home. He or she may tell you to go to your primary care clinic or emergency room/urgent care.

**Q: Why do I need to call before I see a provider?**

**A:** This is so we can protect you, other patients, and medical staff from unnecessary exposure to COVID-19.

**Q: When do I seek medical care?**

**A:** You should only go to a clinic or hospital if you are advised to, or are having difficulty breathing or have flu-like symptoms that aren't getting better with time. First, call for advice. The nurse or office staff will assess your symptoms. They may have you speak to a healthcare provider or tell you to come directly to the office/clinic or hospital. You should:

- Call your military or civilian primary care clinic directly
- Send your primary care physician a secure online message, if you can do so.

**Q: What can I do to protect myself and my family from COVID-19?**

**A:** There are a number of things you can do – Learn more at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention.html?>

- **Practice good personal hygiene.**  
This includes:
  - Washing your hands (at least 20 seconds with soap and water) or use a hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol
  - Disinfecting frequently touched surfaces and surfaces where you prepare food

- Using tissues when you cough or sneeze, throwing the tissues away, and washing your hands
- Coughing or sneezing [into your upper sleeve or elbow](#), not your hands, if you don't have a tissue.
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- **Practice social distancing – check local government updates**  
<https://coronavirus.wa.gov/whats-open-and-closed>
  - Avoiding being close to others who are ill or showing symptoms. Greet people verbally instead of shaking hands or hugging.
  - Limiting touching frequently touched services in public, e.g. opening doors, pressing elevator buttons, using hand rails, handling menus
- **Get a flu shot if you didn't get one earlier.** The flu vaccine won't protect you from COVID-19, but the flu currently poses a greater threat to the public than COVID-19.
- **Avoid public activities or areas visited by a large number of people.**
- **Get the pneumonia vaccine if you're eligible.** It's recommended for adults 65 and older, all children younger than 2 years, persons 2 through 64 years with certain health conditions, and adults 19-64 who smoke cigarettes. It doesn't protect you from COVID-19, but lowers your risk of bacterial infection.  
Read more at <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/pneumo/index.html>

**Note: Face masks**

- **There is no need for you to wear a face mask in public if you aren't sick.** If you're not sick with fever, coughs, or sneezes, stay home. If you must leave home for any reason, cover all coughs and sneezes with a tissue or cough or sneeze into your elbow or sleeve. A mask helps prevent an ill person from spreading the virus, but won't protect a healthy person from being exposed to it.
- **If you are sick:** You should wear a face mask when you are around other people (e.g., sharing a room or vehicle) or pets and before you enter a healthcare provider's office.
- **If you are caring for others:** If the person who is sick is not able to wear a face mask (for example, because it causes trouble breathing), then people who live with the person who is sick should not stay in the same room with them, or they should wear a face mask if they enter a room with the person who is sick.

**Q: Will my military or civilian hospital or clinic be able to test for COVID-19?**

**A:** Yes, if it has the ability to test for COVID-19. If it lacks the ability to test in-house, it will send the sample to an outside laboratory.

**Q: I heard a patient who tested positive for COVID-19 was seen in my primary care office. Should I be concerned if I have an appointment, surgical procedure, or to have my baby in the same MTF?**

**A:** No, clinics and hospitals follow federal or state guidelines for keeping sick patients away from others. They also follow strict guidelines on infection control and cleaning public areas and

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treatment rooms. You should feel safe to get treatment, elective procedures, or even deliver your baby. Please check DOD, HealthMil, and TRICARE for latest updates. If you see civilian providers through USFHP, please check with your primary care clinic and on your provider network's website for more information and latest updates. Another resource is [www.doh.wa.gov](http://www.doh.wa.gov)

**Q: What about if I'm told I have been exposed?**

**A:** If you were exposed, you should contact your local military clinic or hospital, or your local health department. They can arrange for information to be gathered by the public health team.

**Q: I have a vacation coming up. I plan on going to an area affected by COVID-19. What should I do?**

**A:** The CDC recommends that travelers avoid certain countries and delaying travel if you have chronic medical conditions. The country list changes. For the latest travel guidelines, check the CDC website at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>

**Q: How can I prepare for possible quarantine and protect myself?**

**A:** Develop a household plan based on daily needs and routine. Check your food and supplies; make care arrangements for children, elders and pets; and make sure you have enough critical prescription drugs.

Public health officials may recommend actions if there is a local community outbreak. They will likely take actions that limit exposure, such as cancelling large gatherings. Check out the CDC website on how to prevent illness and protect yourself: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/protect/index.html>

**Q: What is the treatment if I'm diagnosed with COVID-19?**

**A:** Most people can recover from COVID-19 at home. Treatment is similar for that of the flu - rest and fluids. There are currently no antiviral drugs recommended or licensed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for COVID-19 for adults or children. Families should try to prevent the spread of respiratory infections, by covering coughs and sneezes, cleaning hands often with soap and water or 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer, and staying up to date on vaccinations, including the flu vaccine. Follow the Center for Disease Control (CDC) instructions on [how to take care of yourself at home](#). Doctors treat severe cases in the hospital - with intravenous fluids and breathing machines, and more if necessary.