**Symptoms:**

**What's coronavirus COVID-19?**

The CDC defines COVID-19 as a new type of coronavirus (or “novel coronavirus”). COVID-19 belongs to a large family of viruses that are common in people and different animal species. On rare occasions, animal coronaviruses can infect people, and then spread from person-to-person. This is how COVID-19 started. Typical symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, coughing, and shortness of breath. Symptoms can range from mild to severe.

To learn more about COVID-19, prevention steps, guidance for high risk groups, travelers, and more, please visit the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

**What is coronavirus (COVID-19) disease symptoms?**

Common symptoms of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) can include fevers, coughing and shortness of breath or difficulty breathing. Some people have also reported headaches and body aches. Different people can experience different symptoms, but we look for the most common.

**How can I tell if my symptoms are Flu/Cold or coronavirus (COVID-19) disease?**

The symptoms of flu can include fever or feeling feverish/chills, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches and fatigue (tiredness). Cold symptoms are usually milder than the symptoms of flu. People with colds are more likely to have a runny or stuffy nose. Colds generally do not result in serious health problems.  Common coronavirus COVID-19 disease symptoms include fever, cough, shortness of breath and flu-like symptoms. It is important to note that all are spread by air-borne respiratory droplets and contaminated surfaces.  Therefore, take actions to reduce the risk of getting sick.

**How long do symptoms last?**

Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure and it has not yet been determined how long the symptoms could last. Typical viral illnesses may last up to 10-14 days.

**Should I go to the emergency department if I’m feeling sick?**

People at higher risk for serious illness from coronavirus COVID-19 should contact their healthcare provider early, even if their illness is mild.  Older adults and people who have severe underlying chronic medical conditions like heart or lung disease, asthma, or diabetes seem to be at higher risk for developing more serious complications from coronavirus COVID-19 illness. You should seek medical attention immediately or call 911 if you have difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion or inability to arouse, or bluish lips or face.

**What temperature am I monitoring for?**

The body temperature of a healthy person averages 98.6 F (or 37 C).  Some people may run higher or lower, but if you hit 100.4 F (38 C), you have a fever.

**Exposure**

**What if I was around someone who was around another person with COVID-19 (Corona Virus)?**

If the person you were around had a confirmed case of COVID-19, you should get a call from the Health Department notifying you of your exposure. If this happens, please follow the instructions given to you by the Health Department and contact your health care provider by phone, secure messaging on MyHealtheVet or video. If you feel well and healthy, you should practice social distancing, hand washing, and covering coughs or sneezes. You should also keep an eye out for flu like symptoms, especially fever, a cough or difficulty breathing. You should go to the closest emergency department if you develop any severe symptoms, such as difficulty breathing. If you develop mild symptoms, you should contact your health care provider by phone or video rather than in person so you can protect others from exposure.

**What if I had a cough/cold before meeting a COVID-19 (Corona Virus) person and I still have the symptoms?**

Because you have respiratory symptoms and recent exposure to COVID-19, we will need to discuss your case with your local health care team. The local public health authority may need to be contacted for recommendations per CDC guidance, although symptoms that are ongoing for months are not likely to represent acute infection. You should watch for changes in your symptoms, or new symptoms such as flu like symptoms, especially fever, a cough,  or difficulty breathing.  If you have worsening symptoms, you should seek care immediately. People who are 65 or older and people who have underlying medical conditions such as pregnancy, heart or lung disease, diabetes, and those who are immunocompromised should contact their physician early in the course of even mild illness. Use precautions including social distancing, hand washing, and covering coughs and sneezes.

**How would I know if I was exposed to someone who is positive if the people I’m around don’t know if they are positive?**

There is no way to know if a person doesn't share that information with you unless you are notified by the Public Health Department and they tell you that you were exposed. Patients who have severe symptoms, such as difficulty breathing, should seek care immediately. Older patients and individuals who have underlying medical conditions or who are immunocompromised should contact their physician early in the course of even mild illness. You should watch for flu like symptoms - especially fever, cough or difficulty breathing. You should use precautions including social distancing, hand washing, and covering coughs and sneezes.

**My kid/grandkid’s school is shut down for 2 weeks, how do I make sure not to get it from them?**

You probably won't know for certain if you were exposed unless the Health Department calls to tell you that you were exposed. The risk of exposure is low. If you have any high-risk conditions such as heart or lung disease, pregnancy, are 65yo or older, or have immunosuppression, you should consider distancing yourself from them. You should watch for flu like symptoms, especially fever, a cough or difficulty breathing. You should use precautions including social distancing, not sharing utensils, etc, practice hand washing, and covering coughs and sneezes. If your child is sick, keep them at home and contact your healthcare provider. Talk with teachers about classroom assignments and activities they can do from home to keep up with their schoolwork.

**Testing**

**I don’t have symptoms but want to get checked/Can I get tested to make sure I don’t give it to others/I have no symptoms or exposure or travel but was told I should be tested due to my age?**

Testing is based on multiple criteria including presence and severity of symptoms, concern for complications due to other conditions/illnesses and degree of exposure via travel or community.

**Is the VA testing?**

Yes. The VA has been testing patients whom they determine meet testing criteria. We can expect testing to become more widely available over the next few weeks.

**How long does it take for test results to come back?**

That depends upon which lab runs them but typically 24 - 72 hours is the usual.

**How many tests does the VA have?**

The manufacture of testing kits is a continuous and ongoing process and the VA is working to procure all the tests necessary to keep our population safe.

**I had flu (untested) last month, do you think it was COVID-19 (Corona Virus)? Can I get tested to make sure?**

If you have no other risk factors regarding exposure to COVID-19 (Corona Virus) and your symptoms are better, we do not recommend COVID-19 (Corona Virus) testing currently.

If you have other risk factors such as exposure to someone with known COVID-19 (Corona Virus) (you would have been contacted by the Health Department), had traveled internationally or to other high risk areas, or were on a cruise ship you could have had COVID-19 (Corona Virus), we will contact your health care team and have them call you to further assess your risk.

**Quarantine**

**How do I know if I should self-quarantine?**

We can ask you some questions about your risk and go from there. If you seem to be at higher risk, we will contact your health care team (or you can call or Secure Message them using MyHealtheVet) to let them know so you can decide together the best course of action.

**How long should I quarantine?**

The current recommendation is to self-quarantine for 2 weeks after a possible or known exposure. For example, for 2 weeks after disembarking a cruise ship with know COVID-19, or 2 weeks after the day you return from travel to an area with high community spreading of COVID-19. Check the CDC website for more information on traveling.

**Should the rest of my house quarantine?**

No. The CDC recommends that if your self-quarantine, you should keep to one room – and one bathroom if you are able - as much as possible if you live with family or roommates. If you have upper respiratory symptoms such as a cough, you should wear a mask to protect others. Be careful about disinfecting surfaces after you touch them and avoid sharing things such as utensils.

**How will I get enough of my medications to last through a quarantine?**

Please contact your provider by using secure messaging on My HealtheVet or by telephone to let them know what medications you will need.

**Prevention/Immunity**

**If I need to leave my house to go to the store/pharmacy/etc, how do I stay safe?**

Use social distancing by staying 6 feet or more away from others, avoid anyone who appears sick, and take care to avoid touching your face. If you can wipe down frequently touched spaces such as handles, do so. If you go through a store and touch things while you are there, either wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer and avoid touching your face.

**What else can I do to protect myself beside washing hands and covering cough/sneezes?**

* 1. Social distancing: Staying 6 feet or more away from others
  2. Stay home except to get medical care. Call ahead use secure messaging on MyHealtheVet your provider using MyHealtheVet before going in person to visit your doctor. This will decrease exposure risk to you and to others.
  3. If possible, reduce going go to work, school, or other public areas.
  4. Avoid using public transportation, ridesharing, or taxis.
  5. Separate yourself from other people and animals in your home.
  6. Do not handle pets or other animals while sick. However, service animals should be permitted to remain with their handlers.
  7. Wear a facemask when you are around other people or pets or before entering your provider’s office.
  8. Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue and discard the tissue.
  9. Clean your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol.
  10. Avoid sharing personal household items such as dishes, eating utensils, towels, and bedding. Wash these items with soap and water after use.
  11. Clean all "high-touch" surfaces with household cleaning spray every day, including light switches, counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, remotes, and bedside tables. Also, clean any surfaces that may have blood, stool, or body fluids on them.
  12. Monitor your symptoms, including your temperature, and seek prompt medical attention if your illness worsens
  13. Call 911 if you have a medical emergency, notify the dispatch personnel that you have, or are being evaluated for COVID-19
  14. Remain in isolation until you are better and have consulted your provider. A follow-up COVID-19 test may be required

Reference <https://vaww.visn21.portal.va.gov/sanfrancisco/PA/Site%20Assets/Isolation-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

**Should I wear a mask?**

If you are feeling well and healthy, there is no proof that wearing a mask decreases your chance of infection. If you are ill and have respiratory symptoms such as a cough, wearing a mask will protect others around you.

**When will a vaccine be out?**

An announcement was made by the NIH (National Institute of Health) on 3/16/20 about an investigational vaccine, with the first dose given that day.  We cannot know how long it will take to develop a safe, effective vaccine. At this time, it Is very difficult to predict the specific time a vaccine will be available.

**If I get COVID-19 will I have immunity from getting it again?**

We don’t know currently. Prior experience would indicate that exposure leads to a level of immunity, but we will need time to see if that is the case with this virus.

**Travel**

**Is it safe to fly?**

The U.S. has imposed major travel restrictions as a result of widespread transmission of COVID-19 (coronavirus) throughout the world.  People who are sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing should postpone traveling.  Please visit the CDC website to find the most current recommendations, since changes can occur frequently.

**Is it OK to go on a cruise?**

No. The CDC currently recommends avoidance of cruises worldwide. Please visit the CDC website to find the most current recommendations, since changes can occur daily at <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/warning/coronavirus-cruise-ship>

**Should I travel within the US?**

The CDC does not generally issue advisories or restrictions for travel within the United States. However, cases of coronavirus COVID-19 disease have been reported in many states, and some areas are experiencing community spread of the disease. Crowded travel settings, like airports, may increase chances of getting coronavirus COVID-19, if there are other travelers with coronavirus COVID-19 infection. There are several things you should consider when deciding whether it is safe for you to travel.

**I was in China last year; do I need to be screened even though it’s longer than 14 days?**

If you are currently not experiencing any symptoms, have not been on a cruise ship, have not been in a community with widespread or sustained transmission, or in contact with someone with coronavirus COVID-19 in the past 14 days, you do not need to worry about being screened.

**Appointments/Procedures**

## What should I do if have an upcoming VA health appointment?

For routine appointments, we recommendusing telehealth (phone or video) for your scheduled appointment. You can also cancel and reschedule your appointment for a later date.

**To change your in-person appointment to a telehealth visit:** [Use Secure Messaging](http://preview-prod.vfs.va.gov/health-care/secure-messaging)  on MyHealtheVet to send a  message to your provider. You can also [Use the VA appointments tool](http://preview-prod.vfs.va.gov/health-care/schedule-view-va-appointments) to schedule a telehealth appointment online. (Available only for some types of health services.)

## How do I reschedule or cancel my upcoming VA appointment?

Sign in to your VA.gov account to reschedule or cancel your appointments online.

**Please Note:** Some clinics are advising patients to not reschedule or schedule new appointment for some types of routine care, as they develop more guidance on safely providing care to protect patients and staff. Because this is a rapidly changing situation, the best way to get the most up-to-date facility information is to check your local VA health facility’s website at <https://www.va.gov/find-locations>

## How do I know if my VA health facility is still open for regular appointments?

Because this is a rapidly changing situation, the best way to get the most up-to-date facility information is to check your local VA health facility’s website at <https://www.va.gov/find-locations>

**What if someone with coronavirus COVID-19comes into the emergency department when I’m there? How is VA protecting us?**

The VA immediately takes precautions such as giving someone who may have coronavirus COVID-19a mask to use, placing that person in a room by themselves, and sanitizing areas where that person made contact. We are also asking screening questions to assess risk before allowing people into the building.

**Should I come if I don’t have symptoms?**

It is OK to come to work if you are feeling well and healthy and you aren't at high risk. That would mean that you've had no known exposure to someone with coronavirus COVID-19, you haven't traveled internationally, been on a cruise, or been in a community with known widespread transmission in the past 14 days

**Is it OK to have surgery during this outbreak?**

Many health care facilities have stopped doing elective procedures during this time. If you need surgery for an emergency, your health care team will take every precaution to protect you from all infections.

**I was told I need to have Triage/Advice nurse “clear/approve” me to go to my appointment?**

We are asking people some screening questions to assess risk levels. Please let me verify your contact information and I can contact your health care team and have them call you or if you prefer, you can secure message or phone your health care team.

**Can I use emergency care?**

If you’re experiencing a medical emergency, call 911 immediately.

**Will the VA pay for me to go to the ED?**

If you are a Veteran and meet certain criteria, your ED visit may be covered. The VA does not pay for non-Veterans to receive care at the VA, but the VA does provide compassionate care in emergencies for anyone who needs this type of care.

**General Information**

**What does VA do if someone tests positive?**

The VA will contact you with your test results, assess your condition, make recommendations regarding your treatment and tell you what precautions you can take to protect others from exposure. We are also mandated to report positive cases to the Health Department. The Health Department will contact the person who tested positive so they can help with tracking the number and location of people with coronavirus COVID-19, as well as helping to contact those who may have been exposed.

**Are there confirmed cases at my VA?**

We are sorry, but we are not able to answer this question because of privacy laws. The staff at the VA is highly trained to keep Veterans, caregivers, visitors, and staff safe from infection.

**Should I come to work (or for a medical appointment) if I have symptoms?**

Please stay at home if you are ill. Please send a secure message using MyHealtheVet or call your health care team before coming in person. This will decrease the risk or exposure to you and to others. Some medical facilities are now are only seeing people in person for urgent needs. Please secure message or phone before going in person. The VA can provide health care over the phone or over video and can also answer questions over secure messaging.

**Can I get (hand sanitizer, masks, cleaning supplies, etc.) at/from the VA?**

The VA will supply necessary masks, hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies needed while you are on VA property. The VA will supply things such as gloves and masks when they are medically indicated.

**How bad do you think it will be?**

It is still very early to decide about the duration or severity of coronavirus COVID-19. The CDC (Center for Disease Control) website makes frequent updates regarding coronavirus COVID-19 and is a reliable source for information. The CDC website for FAQs is: <https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/sites/VACOVHAPublicHealth/HCI/SitePages/COVID-19%20Frequently%20Asked%20Questions-CDC.aspx>

**Where can a sick family member get tested?**

Currently you need an order from a provider, and we are testing people who a provider believes is at high or moderate risk for coronavirus COVID-19. Depending on where your family member gets care, s/he may be tested at the VA (if your family member gets care at the VA), at a private lab, or at a Health Department. At this time, testing will be done for those who have symptoms consistent with coronavirus COVID-19and have risk regarding exposure such as travel outside the US, to areas within the US with a high incidence of coronavirus COVID-19confirmed infections, or on a cruise within the last 2 weeks, or have been in close contact with someone who is known to have tested positive for coronavirus COVID-19.

**What should I do if I get coronavirus COVID-19?**

You should get in touch with your health care team using Secure Messaging on MyHealtheVet, phone or video to discuss your condition and next steps. If you test positive, you will also be contacted by the Health Department and they will both ask for and provide additional information.

**Is it OK for my boss to take my temp to check for symptoms?**

You can give permission for anyone you wish to help with your care. It is not OK for your boss (or anyone else) to help with your care without your permission except in cases of emergency when you cannot respond such as your heart stops beating, and CPR is needed.

**Should I go to work if I have a cold?**

Please stay at home if you are ill.

**What's VA doing to deal with COVID-19?**

We have activated VA’s emergency management coordination cell (EMCC) and have started clinical screenings at all VA facilities. You can learn more about VA’s public health response at <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/n-coronavirus/>