

Today's Daily Press Conference for COVID-19 will begin at 2:30 pm [Click Here to Watch Live](#)

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Diseases A-Z Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Frequently Asked Questions

## Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Frequently Asked Questions

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[Find More Information About Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Here](#)

### Q: What is 2019 Novel Coronavirus (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 not previously seen in humans. COVID-19 was identified as the cause of an outbreak of respiratory illness first detected in Wuhan, China, that has spread around the world, including the United States and all 50 states. The latest situation summary updates are available on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention web page [2019 Novel Coronavirus](#).

### Q: What is the source of the virus?

A: Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in people and many different species of animals, including camels, cattle, cats and bats. Early on, many of the patients at the epicenter of the COVID-19 outbreak in China had some link to a large seafood and live animal market, suggesting animal-to-person spread. Later, a growing number of patients reportedly did not have exposure to animal markets, indicating person-to-person spread. Person-to-person spread was subsequently reported outside China, including the United States.

### Q: What does it mean that COVID-19 is a Global Pandemic?

A: A pandemic is a global outbreak of disease. Pandemics happen when a new virus emerges to infect people and can spread between people. Because there is little to no pre-existing immunity against the new virus, it spreads worldwide. The virus that causes COVID-19 is infecting people and spreading easily from person-to-person. Cases have been detected in most countries worldwide, including the United States, which has recorded cases in all 50 states.

### Q: What are the symptoms of COVID-2019?

A: People who are infected with COVID-19 have developed mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms including fever, cough, shortness of breath, and potentially respiratory distress 2-14 days after exposure. Call your health care provider for medical advice if you think you have been exposed to COVID-19 and develop a fever and symptoms, such as cough or difficulty breathing.

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

A: COVID-19 has been shown to spread between people. Someone who is actively sick with COVID-19 can spread the illness to others, so CDC recommends these patients be isolated either in the hospital or at home (depending on the severity of their illness) until they are better and no longer pose a risk of infecting others. Human coronaviruses typically spread through the air by coughing and sneezing. How long someone is actively sick can vary so the decision on when to release someone from isolation is made on a case-by-case basis in consultation with doctors, infection prevention and control experts, and public health officials and involves considering specifics of each situation, including disease severity, illness signs and symptoms, and results of laboratory testing for that patient.

Current CDC guidance for when it is OK to release someone from isolation is made on a case by case basis and includes meeting all of the following requirements:

- The patient is free from fever without the use of fever-reducing medications for at least 72 hours.
- The patient is no longer showing symptoms, including cough.
- It has been at least 7 days since the onset of the patient's illness.

This recommendation is to help prevent most, but may not prevent all, instances of secondary spread. According to CDC, the risk of transmission after recovery is likely very substantially less than that during illness.

Someone who has been released from isolation is not considered to pose a risk of infection to others.

### Q: How is COVID-19 diagnosed?

A: There are many tests being used to diagnose COVID-19 that the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) has authorized to use during the current emergency. All of these diagnostic tests identify the virus in samples from the respiratory system, such as from nasal or nasopharyngeal swabs. Some tests are conducted at the testing site you visit, and results are available to you within minutes. Other tests must be sent to a laboratory to analyze, a process that takes several days.

### Q: Can someone spread the virus without being sick?

A: People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest). Some spread might be possible before people show symptoms. There have been reports of this occurring with COVID-19, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

### Q: Will warm weather stop the outbreak of COVID-19?

It is not yet known whether weather and temperature impact the spread of COVID-19. Some other viruses, like the common cold and flu, spread more during cold weather months but that does not mean it is impossible to become sick with these viruses during other months. At this time it is not known whether the spread of COVID-19 will decrease when weather becomes warmer. There is much more to learn about the transmissibility, severity and other features associated with COVID-19 and investigations are ongoing.

### Q: What does the Governor's stay at home order mean?

The Governor's recently modified stay-at-home order (effective May 1) directs Illinoisans to stop movements outside of their homes beyond essential needs, such as getting groceries or medicine, through May 29. <https://www2.illinois.gov/Pages/Executive-Orders/ExecutiveOrder2020-32.asp>

### Q: Why is this stay at home order necessary?

The COVID-19 pandemic presents an unprecedented health threat to Illinois. In order to contain the spread of COVID-19, stay at home orders have shown by minimizing contact between people the chance of spreading COVID-19 is greatly reduced.

### Q: When is it okay for me to leave my home?

You may leave your home ONLY to perform the following activities:

- **Health and safety** – obtaining emergency services, visiting a health care professional, picking up medical supplies or medications.
- **Outdoor activities** – walking, hiking, jogging, biking, visiting public parks and open outdoor recreation areas, provided you comply with social distancing requirements. Boating, fishing and golf are allowed with some restrictions.
- **Supplies and Services** – shopping for groceries; gasoline; take-out food; products necessary to maintain the safety, sanitation and essential operations of homes; or materials needed to work at home.
- **Care of others** – travel to care for the elderly, family member, persons with disabilities or underlying health conditions, a friend or pet in another household.
- **Essential businesses** – travel to perform work providing essential products and services, such as health care and public health, public safety, governmental functions, banks, food and agriculture, and media
- **Funerals** – services are permissible, including those with more than 10 attendees, but the mortuary must ensure adequate social distancing, considering the space of the facility, whether it is indoors or outdoors.
- **Religion** – to engage in the free exercise of religion, provided it complies with social distancing requirements and the limit on gatherings of more than 10 people in keeping with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines for the protection of public health. Religious organizations and houses of worship are encouraged to use online or drive-in services to protect the health and safety of their congregants.

### Q: What is social distancing?

A: Social distancing is deliberately increasing the physical space between people to avoid spreading illness. Staying at least 6 feet away from other people reduces the chances of catching COVID-19. Other examples of social distancing with the goal of avoiding crowds, crowded spaces and mass gatherings include working from home instead of the office, closing schools and switching to on-line classes, visiting loved ones by electronic devices instead of in person, suspending worship services, and canceling or postponing large meetings.

### Q: What is the state recommending for social distancing?

A: To the extent individuals are using shared or outdoor spaces outside their residence, they must always and as much as reasonably possible maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet from any other person. Any public or private gathering of more than 10 people occurring outside a single household is prohibited.

### Q: Can I go outdoors?

A: Yes, go outdoors for fresh air and exercise. Ride a bike, walk the dog, go for a hike, jog. Social distancing does not mean staying indoors, it means avoiding close contact with people. Fishing and boating are permitted with groups of no more than two people and individuals follow guidelines provided by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. Golf is allowed with precautions and restrictions, including players must be grouped in twosomes, tee times can only be made online or by telephone, and golfers must walk and carry their own clubs. For additional information visit <https://www2.illinois.gov/dceo/Documents/Golf%20With%20Restrictions.pdf>. Individuals may walk to public parks and open outdoor recreation areas, including specific state parks that remain open as designated by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Playgrounds, however, pose a high risk of spreading COVID-19 and are closed. Remember to wash your hands any time you enter from outdoors and before you eat.

### Q: Can I go to the supermarket?

A: Yes. Buy as much as you need to lessen the number of trips and try and shop when the store is least likely to be crowded. The Governor has required grocery stores to cap occupancy at 50 percent of store capacity, set up store aisles to be one-way where practicable to maximize spacing between customers and discontinue the use of reusable bags. Some grocery stores have designated special hours for the elderly (over age 60), pregnant women and those with compromised immune systems to lessen their exposure to large crowds and possible exposure to COVID-19.

### Q: What other businesses besides grocery stores are considered essential?

A: Essential businesses are defined as health care and public health operations, human services, essential governmental functions and essential infrastructure. Other businesses deemed essential include stores that sell medicine, food, beverage and cannabis; organizations that provide charitable and social services; media; gas stations and businesses needed for transportation; financial institutions; hardware and supply stores; greenhouses, garden centers, and nurseries; building and construction; mail, shipping, logistics, delivery, and pick-up services; educational institutions; laundry services; transportation; home-based care and services; hotels and motels; funeral homes; labor unions; manufacture, distribution, and supply chains for critical products and industries; day care centers for employees exempted by the Governor's executive order; professional services; and residential facilities and shelters. For a complete list, visit <https://www2.illinois.gov/Pages/Executive-Orders/ExecutiveOrder2020-33.aspx>

### Q: What about restaurants?

A: Restaurants can prepare and serve food for consumption off-premises, through in-house delivery, third-party delivery, drive-through, curbside pick-up and carry-out. Restaurants, however, cannot open for in-store dining.

### Q: How can I help protect myself?

A: Follow these tips to help prevent COVID-19:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick with respiratory symptoms.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- If you have not already done so, discuss influenza vaccination with your health care provider to help protect you against seasonal influenza.

### Q: Should I wear a facemask or cloth face covering?

A: Yes. The Governor's latest executive order requires anyone over the age of 2 who can medically tolerate a face covering to cover their mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when in a public place and unable to maintain a safe distance (6 feet) from others. Essential businesses and manufacturers are required to provide face-coverings to all employees who are unable to maintain 6 feet of social distancing.

- You could spread COVID-19 to others even if you do not feel sick. Everyone should wear a cloth face cover when they must go out in public, for example to the grocery store or to pick up other necessities.
- Cloth face coverings should not be placed on children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.
- The cloth face cover is meant to protect other people in case you are infected.
- Do NOT use a facemask meant for a health care worker.
- Continue to keep about 6 feet between yourself and others. The cloth face cover is not a substitute for social distancing.

### Q: What steps should parents take to protect children?

A: This is a new virus and we are still learning about it, but so far, there does not seem to be a lot of illness in children. Most illness, including serious illness, is happening in adults of working age and older adults. Discourage children and teens from gathering in other public places while school is dismissed to help slow the spread of COVID-19 in the community. Encourage frequent handwashing and follow other prevention tips.

### Q: Who is at higher risk?

A: COVID-19 is a new disease and we are learning more about it every day. Older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions may be at higher risk for more serious complications from COVID-19. Based upon available information to date, the CDC has said those most at risk include:

- People 65 years and older
- People who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility
- People who are pregnant
- People of any age with the following underlying medical conditions, particularly those that are not well controlled:
  - Chronic lung disease or asthma
  - Congestive heart failure or coronary artery disease
  - Diabetes
  - Neurologic conditions that weaken the ability to cough
  - Weakened immune system
  - Chemotherapy radiation for cancer (currently or in recent past)
  - Sickle cell anemia
  - Chronic kidney diseases requiring dialysis
  - Cirrhosis of the liver
  - Lack of spleen or a spleen that doesn't function correctly
  - Extreme obesity (body mass index (BMI) greater than or equal to 40)

### Q: Should I clean "high touch" surfaces?

A: Yes. Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets and sinks. If surfaces are dirty, clean them using detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection. To disinfect, most common EPA-registered household disinfectants will work.

### Q: Is there a vaccine?

A: No. Currently, there is not a vaccine for COVID-19.

### Q: What are the treatments for COVID-19?

A: Currently, there are no specific treatments recommended for illnesses caused by COVID-19. Medical care is supportive to help relieve symptoms.

### Q: Can I get COVID-19 from my pet?

A: Currently, there is no evidence that animals play a significant role in spreading the virus that causes COVID-19. Based on the limited information available to date, the risk of animals spreading COVID-19 to people is considered to be low. A small number of pets have been reported to be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, mostly after contact with people with COVID-19.

### Q: Can animals carry the virus that causes COVID-19 on their skin or fur?

A: Although we know certain bacteria and fungi can be carried on fur and hair, there is no evidence that viruses, including the virus that causes COVID-19, can spread to people from the skin, fur, or hair of pets.

However, because animals can sometimes carry other germs that can make people sick, it's always a good idea to practice healthy habits around pets and other animals, including washing hands before and after interacting with them.

### Q: Can I give COVID-19 to my pet?

A: To date, there is no evidence of human-to-pet illness in pets. We are still learning about this virus, but it appears it can spread from people to animals in some situations.

### Q: What precautions should I take around my pet?

A: While there is no evidence to suggest pets are a source of COVID-19 infection at this time, animals can carry germs that can make people sick. It's always a good idea to practice healthy habits around pets and other animals.

Wash your hands after handling animals, their food, waste or supplies. Practice good pet hygiene and clean up after pets properly. Talk to your veterinarian if you have questions about your pet's health.

- If you must care for your pet or be around animals while you are sick, wash your hands before and after you interact with pets and wear a cloth face covering.

### Q: Do I need to get my pet tested for COVID-19?

A: No. At this time, routine testing of animals for COVID-19 is not recommended.

### Q: What should I do if my pet gets sick and I think it's COVID-19?

A: There is a small number of animals around the world reported to be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, mostly after having contact with a person with COVID-19. Talk to your veterinarian about any health concerns you have about your pets.

If your pet gets sick after contact with a person with COVID-19, **do not take your pet to the veterinary clinic yourself**. Call your veterinarian and let them know the pet was around a person with COVID-19. Some veterinarians may offer telemedicine consultations or other plans for seeing sick pets. Your veterinarian can evaluate your pet and determine the next steps for your pet's treatment and care.

### Q: Can I walk my dog?

A: Walking a dog is important for both animal and human health and well-being. Walk dogs on a leash, maintaining at least 6 feet (2 meters) from other people and animals, do not gather in groups, and stay out of crowded places and avoid mass gatherings. Do not go to dog parks or public places where many people and dogs gather. To help maintain social distancing, do not let other people pet your dog when you are out for a walk.

### Q: What animals can get COVID-19?

A: We don't know for sure which animals can be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19. CDC is aware of a small number of pets, including dogs and cats, reported to be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, mostly after close contact with people with COVID-19. Several tigers at a zoo in New York have also tested positive for the virus.

Recent research shows that ferrets, cats, and golden Syrian hamsters can be experimentally infected with the virus and can spread the infection to other animals of the same species in laboratory settings. Pigs, chickens, and ducks did not become infected or spread the infection based on results from these studies. Data from one study suggested dogs are not as likely to become infected with the virus as cats and ferrets. These findings were based on a small number of animals, and do not show whether animals can spread infection to people.

Currently, there is no evidence that animals play a significant role in spreading the virus that causes COVID-19. Based on the limited information available to date, the risk of animals spreading COVID-19 to people is considered to be low. Further studies are needed to understand if and how different animals could be affected by the virus that causes COVID-19 and the role animals may play in the spread of COVID-19.

### Q: Should I avoid contact with pets or other animals if I am sick with COVID-19?

A: We are still learning about this virus, but it appears that it can spread from people to animals in some situations. Until we learn more about this new coronavirus, you should restrict contact with pets and other animals while you are sick with COVID-19, just like you would with people. When possible, have another member of your household care for your animals while you are sick. If you are sick with COVID-19, avoid contact with your pet, including

- Petting
- Snuggling
- Being kissed or licked
- Sharing food or bedding

### Q: What should health care providers, laboratories and health departments do?

A: Health care providers and laboratories should report suspect COVID-19 cases immediately (within 3 hours) to their local health department, who should report cases to IDPH within the same time frame. For recommendations and guidance, see the [IDPH Coronavirus Page](#) or the CDC's web page [2019 Novel Coronavirus](#).

**Q: What are public health departments in Illinois doing about this situation?**

A: IDPH and local health departments have implemented heightened surveillance to identify and test patients most likely to have COVID-19. Public health experts are communicating with and educating health care providers and other public health partners about the current situation. Measures are being developed to prevent the spread of illness in Illinois. Frequent communication with the public will be available through the [IDPH Coronavirus Page](#).

Find CDC Travel Information here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/travelers/index.html>