



Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): How is it transmitted?

23 December 2021 | Q&A

The English version was updated on 23 December 2021.

[How does COVID-19 spread between people?](#)

We know that the disease is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which spreads between people in several different ways.

- **Current evidence suggests that the virus spreads mainly between people who are in close contact with each other, for example at a conversational distance. The virus can spread from an infected person's mouth or nose in small liquid particles when they cough, sneeze, speak, sing or breathe. Another person can then contract the virus when infectious particles that pass through the air are inhaled at short range (this is often called short-range aerosol or short-range airborne transmission) or if infectious particles come into direct contact with the eyes, nose, or mouth (droplet transmission).**

- **The virus can also spread in poorly ventilated and/or crowded indoor settings, where people tend to spend longer periods of time. This is because aerosols can remain suspended in the air or travel farther than conversational distance (this is often called long-range aerosol or long-range airborne transmission).**
- **People may also become infected when touching their eyes, nose or mouth after touching surfaces or objects that have been contaminated by the virus.**

Further research is ongoing to better understand the spread of the virus and which settings are most risky and why. Research is also under way to study virus variants that are emerging and why some are more transmissible. For updated information on SARS-CoV-2 variants, please read the [weekly epidemiologic updates](#).

When do infected people transmit the virus?

What is the difference between people who are asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic? Don't they both mean someone without symptoms?

Are there certain settings where COVID-19 can spread more easily?

How can I reduce my risk of getting COVID-19?

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