# Should I get a face mask?

Yes, you should wear a mask whenever you are in a public place where you will encounter other people. The coronavirus that causes COVID-19 can spread between people interacting in close proximity — for example, speaking, coughing, sneezing, or singing— even if those people do not symptoms. Learn more information about how [masks](https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/coronavirus-face-masks-what-you-need-to-know) help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

[Learn more about protecting yourself from coronavirus.](https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/how-can-i-protect-myself-from-coronavirus)

# Can I make my own hand sanitizer?

There are no studies supporting the effectiveness of homemade hand sanitizer blend in killing the new coronavirus on people’s hands. Experts agree that the best method for cleaning hands is washing for at least 20 seconds with soap and water.

# Can coronavirus live on objects? Mail from affected areas? Clothes?

There is no evidence at present that items imported from affected areas and shipped or mailed over the course of days or weeks are spreading COVID-19. Although the new coronavirus weakens and dies over time outside of the human body, studies suggest that it can live on surfaces for a few hours or up to several days, depending on surface, temperature and other environmental factors. For instance, a small amount of the new coronavirus is still detectable on plastic surfaces for up to three days, on stainless steel for up to two days and up to one day on cardboard, [but it’s at less than 0.1% of the starting virus material](https://hub.jhu.edu/2020/03/20/sars-cov-2-survive-on-surfaces/).

So far, evidence suggests that the virus does not survive as well on a soft surface (such as fabric) as it does on frequently touched hard surfaces like elevator buttons and door handles.

More research will provide information on the coronavirus and how long it lives on surfaces. In the meantime, [wash your hands thoroughly](https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/how-can-i-protect-myself-from-coronavirus) after handling mail, and carefully dispose of all outer packaging.

# Is it safe to order take-out?

According to the [Food and Drug Administration (FDA),](https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-during-emergencies/food-safety-and-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19#March27QAs) there have not been any cases of COVID-19 known to be caused from eating food or handling food packaging.

Here are some steps you can follow to help protect yourself when ordering groceries or carryout:

* Before ordering groceries or carryout, check to see if you can pay online or over the phone.
* Ask the delivery person to leave your packages at the door or on the porch.
* If you go in person and curbside pickup is not available, make sure you maintain 6 feet of distance between you and the cashier.
* Because carryout bags and containers have been touched recently by others, it is important to wash your hands after handling these.
* Dispose of all packaging, and wash your hands again before eating.

Learn more: [Coronavirus Disease 2019: Myth vs. Fact](https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/2019-novel-coronavirus-myth-versus-fact)

# Is grocery shopping safe during the coronavirus pandemic?

It’s best not to make unnecessary trips, but if you need to go to a grocery store, it’s important to maintain social and physical distancing as you shop, and to clean your hands often while shopping and as soon as you get home.

Here are some other suggestions:

* Have one adult go shopping instead of the whole family, especially since children like to touch objects and then their faces.
* Plan to stock up for at least a week so you can minimize the number of trips.
* When you’re at the store, stay at least 6 feet away from others.
* Clean the handle of the shopping basket or cart with a disinfectant wipe or alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
* Don’t touch your face, and keep your phone in your pocket because it may harbor viruses — use a paper list instead.
* Hard surfaces are more likely to be contaminated than soft surfaces (such as fabric), so be mindful of commonly touched surfaces such as payment equipment and self-checkout machines.
* If you use reusable shopping bags, wipe them with disinfectant or launder them once you’ve put your groceries away.
* Wear a [cloth face covering](https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/coronavirus-face-masks-what-you-need-to-know) if you are not able to practice physical distancing while shopping.

# Should I stop going to the gym?

As the new coronavirus is spreading, be cautious about all possible exposures, including at the gym or fitness center. The virus isn’t spread through perspiration (sweat), but items touched by many people (barbells, etc.) could pose a risk. In order to practice [social and physical distancing](https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/coronavirus-social-distancing-and-self-quarantine) during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is best to avoid public places at this time.

# Should I cancel my trip?

At this time, [social and physical distancing](https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/coronavirus-social-distancing-and-self-quarantine) are important to follow, so overall, travel is discouraged. Outbreaks of the new coronavirus and COVID-19, the disease it causes, are occurring in the United States and in countries around the world. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has [updated travel information](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/faqs.html)on a range of destinations.

Travelers should be cautious about cruise ship travel and situations that involve crowded places. You are less likely to catch the new coronavirus on airplanes because of circulation and filtering, but you may be asked about your infection risk when you book a flight. And be aware that you may be prevented from returning from certain sites should they be on lockdown.

# Can humans get coronavirus from dogs or cats?

[Jason Villano, D.V.M., M.S., M.Sc.](https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/profiles/results/directory/profile/10005482/jason-villano), a veterinary expert at Johns Hopkins, says, “Despite the very few reports worldwide, including here in the United States, of sick and healthy domestic animals, including pets, testing positive for SARS-CoV-2, the official name for the virus that causes COVID-19, there is little evidence at this time that such animals are easily infected with the virus under normal conditions, or could transmit it.”

The World Organisation for Animal Health in Paris, and in the U.S., the Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), are closely monitoring the situation but do not recommend routine testing of animals. The cases of the tigers in the Bronx Zoo and, more recently, of the two pet cats in New York, should not be cause for public alarm but a reminder that the COVID-19 crisis is actively evolving and that we have yet to learn more about the virus and its effects on both human and animal health.

At this time, experts recommend keeping pets indoors or avoiding socialization of pets with other animals, and maintaining good hygiene when handling or caring for your animals.

* Wash your hands before and after interacting with animals.
* Don’t kiss your pets or let them lick you or share your food.
* Walk dogs on a leash. Do not allow pets to interact with people or other animals outside of the household.
* [ill with COVID-19](https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/diagnosed-with-covid-19-what-to-expect) should let someone else take care of their animals. If this isn’t possible, patients should wear a mask while looking after their pet, and wash their hands before and after.

Reliable sources for updates include the CDC, USDA and the American Veterinary Medical Association.

Knowing the Symptoms

COVID-19 symptoms include:

* Cough
* Fever or chills
* Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
* Muscle or body aches
* Sore throat
* New loss of taste or smell
* Diarrhea
* Headache
* New fatigue
* Nausea or vomiting
* Congestion or runny nose

Symptoms and risk factors may vary in different people. If you have concerns, especially if you think you might have been exposed to COVID-19, call your doctor. [Learn more about COVID-19 symptoms](https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/coronavirus-symptoms-frequently-asked-questions).



Coronavirus Self-Checker and COVID-19 Vaccine FAQ

Check symptoms. Get vaccine information. Protect yourself and others.

[Check Now](https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/coronavirus/covid-19-self-checker.html)

**Coronavirus: What do I do if I Feel Sick?**

If you are concerned that you may have COVID-19, follow these steps to help protect your health and the health of others.

Understanding the New Coronavirus

# What is coronavirus fatality rate?

Right now, it appears that COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus, causes more cases of severe disease and more deaths than the seasonal flu. People over age 85 have the highest risk of fatality and children under 19, the lowest, but this could change as more people are tested and trends become clearer. If, over time, widespread testing reveals more mild, non-fatal cases of COVID-19, the death rate will go down.

[See more about coronavirus by the numbers.](https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/coronavirus-facts-infographic)

# Can coronavirus live in heat? Will the outbreak stop when it gets warm outside?

Several countries currently affected by the new coronavirus outbreak are experiencing summer weather. Some viral illnesses, like the flu, seem to be less common in warmer months, but it is still possible to catch them during that time. Investigations are exploring the effects of temperature and weather on the spread of this new coronavirus.

# Why is it called a “coronavirus?”

Corona means “crown,” and coronaviruses have a “crown” of protruding points on their surface that give them a characteristic appearance when seen under a microscope. Coronaviruses are a whole family of viruses; there are many.

# What’s the difference between the new coronavirus and other coronaviruses?

There are many different kinds of coronavirus. Some only affect animals. Some have been circulating among human beings for years, causing mild colds. Others have caused small, severe human disease outbreaks in the past, such as the coronaviruses that caused SARS in 2003 and MERS in 2012. The new coronavirus is different from these, and was only identified in December 2019.

[Learn more about COVID-19.](https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus)

**Is Coronavirus Airborne?**

Our infection prevention expert provides a brief overview of what we should know about how the coronavirus spreads.

# Is the coronavirus airborne?

Yes, the coronavirus can be transmitted through the air by respiratory droplets. These infectious droplets spread when a person with COVID-19 breathes, talks, sings, coughs or sneezes. The CDC recently updated its information on [airborne spread of the coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/more/scientific-brief-sars-cov-2.html).

Respiratory droplets range in size, but in general they are considered large or small. Large respiratory droplets may be visible, and they fall to the ground relatively close to the person who exhaled them — usually seconds to a minute after they are exhaled. Smaller respiratory droplets, however, may remain suspended in the air for minutes to hours, and they may travel far from the person who exhaled them.

The possibility of the coronavirus being contagious through the air is why it is so important to wear a [mask](https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/coronavirus-face-masks-what-you-need-to-know) at all times when you are around other people. Masks prevent respiratory droplets from spreading, not only when you cough and sneeze, but also when you are talking, singing or exercising.

In addition to wearing a face mask, maintaining physical distancing (of at least 6 feet), hand hygiene, and cleaning and disinfecting surfaces are important ways to prevent virus transmission. Staying away from poorly ventilated indoor areas and crowded indoor gatherings are critical ways to avoid encountering a concentration of suspended small droplets and particles carrying the coronavirus.

The virus may also be spread by touching high-touch surfaces like light switches, door knobs or handrails and then touching your face, mouth or eyes. Make sure to disinfect high-touch surfaces frequently, and wash your hands or use hand sanitizer often.