# What is COVID-19 or Corona?

The virus responsible for COVID-19 is a new (or novel) virus and COVID-19 is a new disease. The virus belongs to a known family called coronaviruses, but it has not been identified previously. Coronaviruses also cause some types of the common cold as well as SARS. Medical professionals are still learning about what makes this specific virus different from the flu and other viruses.

**Here are some differences between COVID-19 and the flu:**

* **Rate of infection/transmission.**With COVID-19, and absent physical distancing, transmission experts are seeing one person give the virus to 2 to 2.5 people which is higher than the flu.
* **Incubation time, from exposure to first symptoms.**With COVID-19, the incubation time is one to 14 days. The flu has an incubation time of one to four days.
* **Higher risk populations.** COVID-19 data indicates that children are less likely to be affected by the virus than adults. Typically, children are key drivers of flu transmission in the community.
* **Mortality rate.** Based on early data, COVID-19 appears to have a higher mortality rate than the flu (especially seasonal flu).

# Was COVID-19 created in a laboratory by accident?

According to the World Health Organization, all available evidence suggests that the novel coronavirus first appeared in China at the end of 2019 and was not manipulated or produced in a laboratory.

# What are the Symptoms I should watch for in my kids?

To date, the symptoms in children appear to be similar to those in adults — essentially cold-like symptoms but vomiting and diarrhea have also been reported. It is still not known if children with underlying health issues are at higher risk for severe illness. While children appear to be at lower risk for serious complications, their symptoms should be taken seriously as there have unfortunately been credible reports of children and infants succumbing to the illness.

# IF I’M A SENIOR WILL THE SYMPTOMS BE WORSE, AND IF YES, WHY?

There’s still a lot to learn about COVID-19, but it appears that older persons and persons with pre-existing medical conditions (such as heart disease, hypertension, lung disease, obesity, cancer, diabetes or weakened immune systems) may be more likely to develop serious illness than others. Symptoms of serious illness include difficulty breathing and/or pneumonia.

# IS THERE ANY CONCERN WITH MOSQUITOES CARRYING THE VIRUS?

No. There’s no current evidence to suggest that mosquitoes carry and transmit COVID-19.

# DO CORONAVIRUSES MUTATE?

Yes. Coronaviruses, including the virus causing COVID-19, do mutate. Researchers from around the world are still determining how possible mutations may affect populations. At this point, there’s no evidence to suggest the mutations have increased the likelihood of being infected with the virus or of developing complications once infected.

# CAN COVID-19 SPREAD THROUGH THE AIR (I.E. IS IT AIRBORNE)?

COVID-19 is mainly transmitted through droplets, which are generated when an infected person coughs, sneezes or speaks. People can become infected if they breathe in these droplets. Some of these droplets also land on surfaces. Other people can catch the virus if they touch these contaminated surfaces and then touch their nose, eyes or mouth.

It is not yet clear whether someone can become infected if, for example, they walk through and inhale virus particles present in a fine mist after an infected person coughs or sneezes.

# HOW DOES COVID-19 SPREAD?

COVID-19 is most commonly spread from an infected person to another person through:

* respiratory droplets (e.g., from coughing or sneezing)
* close, prolonged personal contact (e.g., shaking hands)
* touching something with the virus on it, then touching your face (mouth, nose or eyes) before washing your hands

Evidence suggests that spreading the virus from person to person is efficient when there is close contact. This is why physical distancing measures are so important to reduce transmission of the virus within the community.

# WHY IS THE VIRUS SO QUICK TO SPREAD?

There are a couple of factors that help the virus spread quickly. Preliminary information suggests that the virus may persist on many surfaces for several hours or even days. This means that more people can be exposed to the virus than originally thought.

Recent evidence indicates that the virus can be transmitted to others from someone who is infected but not showing symptoms. This includes people who are pre-symptomatic (not developed symptoms) or asymptomatic (never develop symptoms).

This is why physical distancing and good hygiene measures are so important.

# HOW DO I PREVENT THE SPREAD OF THE VIRUS THAT CAUSES COVID-19?

There are many ways Canadians can help prevent the spread of COVID-19. They include:

* staying home
* practicing physical (social) distancing
* washing your hands frequently
* coughing in your sleeve – if using a tissue, discard and wash hands right away
* disinfect high-touch surfaces often
* avoiding all non-essential travel
* quarantining (self-isolating) and monitoring for symptoms (cough, fever or difficulty breathing) for 14 days

# I AM HEALTHY. SHOULD I WEAR A MASK WHEN I GO OUTSIDE?

Wearing a surgical or medical grade mask while you’re healthy reduces the number of masks available for people who need them, particularly health care providers. Medical grade masks should be reserved for health care providers and people who have been diagnosed with COVID-19.

# WHAT FABRIC SHOULD I USE TO MAKE A HOMEMADE MASK?

Homemade masks should be made with tightly woven cotton, such as quilting fabric, cotton sheets, t-shirts or bandanas. As a rule, if you can see through the fabric, it isn’t tightly woven.

A mask should consist of at least two layers and must be big enough to cover the nose and mouth without gaping. Additionally, the mask must:

* Fit securely to the head with ties or ear loops
* Allow for easy breathing
* Be comfortable so it doesn’t require regular adjustment
* Be changed as soon as it becomes damp or dirty
* Maintain its shape after washing and drying

# IS THERE A DRUG OR TREATMENT FOR COVID-19?

Reports emerge on a near daily basis of treatments that seem to have been effective in one or a few patients, but no vaccine or drug has been approved to prevent or treat COVID-19 yet.

Clinical trials are underway to investigate certain promising vaccines (for prevention) and possible drug therapies (for treatment). Some interventions are already being used based on anecdotal evidence, or as part of formal clinical research trials.

Health care providers are doing their best to stay on top of the latest evidence to treat people who have been diagnosed and help them relieve their symptoms.

# What is the significance of 14 days of Isolation?

As mandated by the Canadian government and public health officials, anyone returning from travel abroad (and from certain provinces and territories) or anyone who has been exposed to the virus must self-isolate for 14 days. Some provinces require anyone returning from any location to self-isolate for 14 days; it is important to be aware of your provincial requirements.

The 14-day duration is based on COVID-19’s total incubation period ― the time between catching it and beginning to show symptoms. Although it ranges between one day to 14 days, people often show symptoms around the fifth day.

If you aren’t showing any symptoms after 14 days, then it’s unlikely you have COVID-19.

# Is there a Vaccine available?

At this time, there is no vaccine for COVID-19.

Researchers around the world are trying to develop a vaccine against the virus responsible for COVID-19, and the World Health Organization is supporting their efforts. Possible vaccines and some specific drug treatments are under development and being tested through clinical trials. Canadian researchers are playing an important role in this effort.

# What is physical or Social Distancing?

[Physical (social) distancing](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/social-distancing.html) means minimizing close contact with others. It means:

* keeping a distance of at least two metres from others
* avoiding crowded places, gatherings and personal greetings (e.g. handshake)
* limiting contact with people at higher risk (older adults and those in poor health)