



COVID-19

Your no-panic guide

Prepare carefully but don't panic

Here are some answers to the most common queries about the Coronavirus based on information from the World Health Organisation's guidelines.



Basics first: What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered called SARS-CoV-2.

This new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019.

What does the term 'coronavirus' mean?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which may cause illness in animals or humans. It affects your respiratory tract, nose, throat, airways and lungs.

In humans, several coronaviruses are known to cause respiratory infections ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

The most recently discovered coronavirus causes COVID-19.



Track your symptoms

COVID-19 symptoms are similar to a common cold or flu and may appear after two to 14 days of exposure.

The illness varies in different people from mild to severe symptoms. If you are displaying symptoms, don't panic. Call your doctor before going to their consultation rooms and follow their advice.

Calling in advance will allow your health care provider to quickly direct you to the right health facility. This will also protect you and help prevent the spread of viruses and other infections.

The most common symptoms of coronavirus are:

- Fever
- Fatigue
- Dry cough
- Headache
- Shortness of breath
- Diarrhoea
- Nausea or vomiting
- Sore muscles
- Loss of taste and smell
- Chills or dizziness



Who is at risk of getting sick?

While we are still learning about how COVID-19 affects human beings, people who are 60 years and older or those with pre-existing medical conditions (such as high blood pressure, heart disease, lung disease, cancer or diabetes) appear to develop serious illness more often than others.

How long is the incubation period for COVID-19?

The “incubation period” is the time between catching the virus and the onset of the symptoms of the disease. Most estimates of the incubation period for COVID-19 range from one to 14 days, most commonly around five days.

How does the coronavirus spread?

You can catch COVID-19 from those who have the virus. The disease can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth, which are spread when a person with COVID-19 coughs or exhales.

These droplets land on objects and surfaces around the person. Other people then catch COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth.

People can also catch COVID-19 if they breathe in droplets from a person with COVID-19 who coughs or exhales droplets.



Should I wear a mask?

Using a face mask is not necessarily for healthy individuals. Face masks have not been proven to prevent people from contracting the virus. However, wearing a mask does help to decrease the risk of transmitting the virus from an infected person to a non-infected individual.

Masks are effective only when used in combination with frequent hand-cleaning with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water

What preventative measures can I take?



Stay hydrated and get adequate rest



Wash your hands regularly with soap and water



Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth



Frequently use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser to keep your hands clean



Throw tissues into a closed bin immediately after use



Practice social distancing and maintain at least one metre distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing



When coughing or sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with a flexed elbow or a tissue.

Will I die if I catch the virus?

No, almost 80% of people have mild symptoms, and recover from the virus within two weeks. People who have received the COVID-19 vaccination are more likely to recover from their symptoms than those who haven't received their vaccination.

Most of the symptoms can be treated with timely care from a certified medical practitioner.

Why is there so much panic?

The contagious nature of the virus combined with a lack of verified facts and floating hearsay contribute to panic that we have seen in many countries.

Are children at risk of coronavirus infection?

Yes, all age groups are at risk for contracting the COVID-19 virus. We are still learning about the coronavirus, but research currently suggests that children under the age of 18 years have fewer deaths compared to people from older age groups.

Can consuming chicken or eggs give me coronavirus?

Coronavirus is not known to spread through poultry and there is no evidence that supports this. Experts recommend only eating meat that is thoroughly cooked.

Can the coronavirus be spread through food?

No sufficient evidence exists yet. Past experience with other coronaviruses like SARS and MERS suggest that people do not get infected through food.

Can I get COVID-19 from our family pet?

There is no evidence that a dog, cat or any pet can transmit COVID-19. COVID-19 is mainly spread through droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or speaks. To protect yourself, clean your hands frequently and thoroughly after handling your pet.



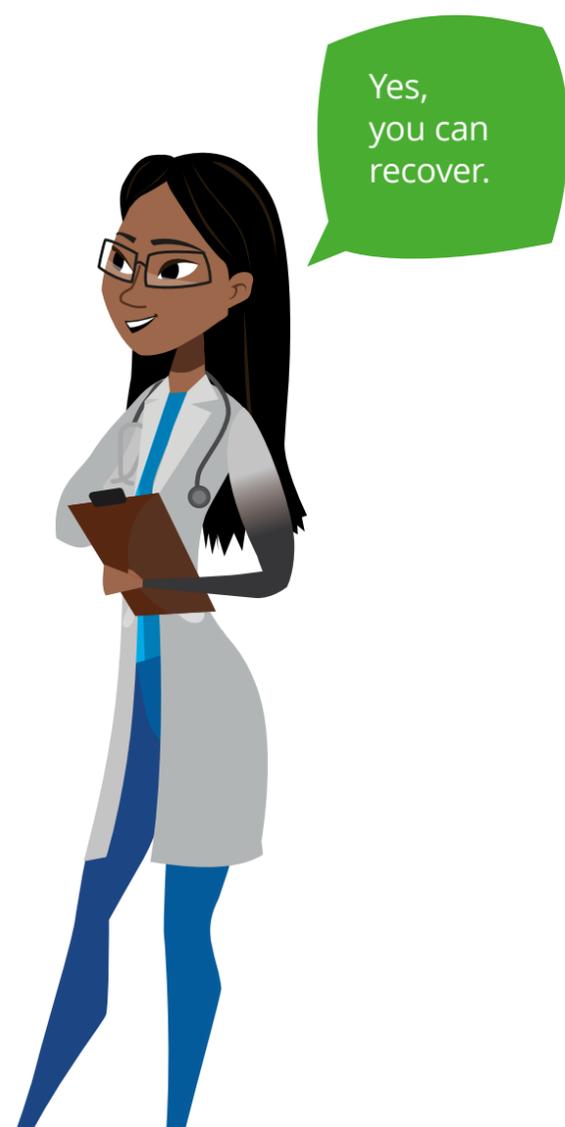
Can coronavirus be treated?

Yes, symptom-based medical care is administered and has proven to be effective.

Globally, several COVID-19 vaccinations have been made publicly available.

Can an infected person recover completely and no longer be infectious?

Yes, about 80% of infected people have recovered from COVID-19 without needing special treatment.





If I have high grade fever, a cough and am experiencing difficulty breathing, should I be tested for coronavirus?

Testing for coronavirus will only be done as recommended by your medical practitioner. Medical practitioners will only administer a test if you meet the criteria of a 'suspected case'.

What's the difference? Cold vs flu vs coronavirus

	Cold	Flu	Coronavirus
Time between catching the virus and beginning to show symptoms	1-3 days	1-4 days	2-14 days
Symptom onset	Gradual	Abrupt	Gradual
How long do symptoms last	7-12 days	3-7 days	Mild cases: - 2 weeks Severe or critical disease: 3-6 weeks

Major symptoms

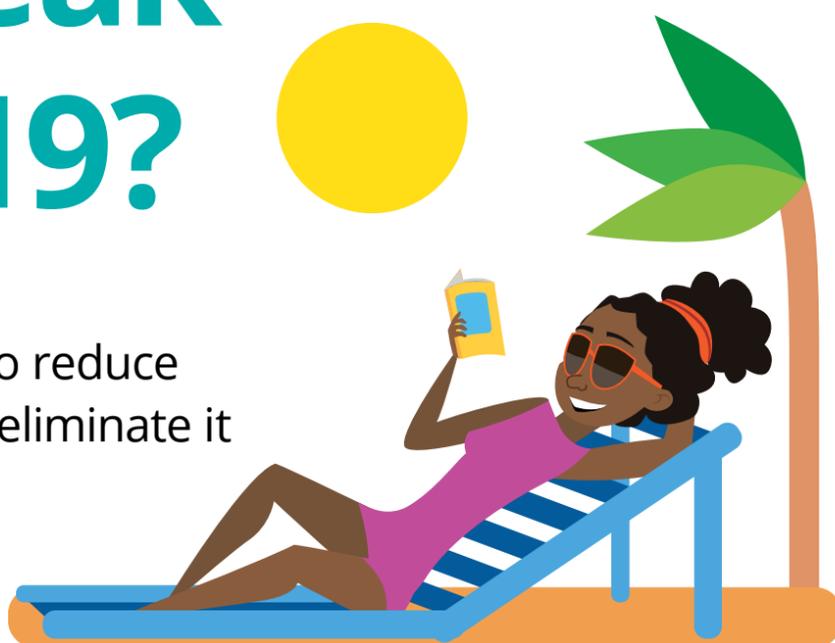
Fever	Sometimes	Common	Common
Runny nose	Common	Sometimes	Less common
Sore throat	Common	Sometimes	Less common
Cough	Common	Sometimes	Common
Body ache	Rare; but mild if it occurs	Common	Less common
Difficulty breathing	Rare	Rare	Common

Why can only designated labs test for coronavirus? Why are there no home sample test kits available?

The virus is highly contagious and can only be tested by special labs equipped to handle contagious pathogens. Currently, only laboratories with biosafety level 4 (BSL4) care are equipped to manage the COVID-19 samples.

Can warm weather stop the outbreak of COVID-19?

Heat and warm weather may help to reduce the spread of COVID-19 but will not eliminate it completely.



Is it safe to receive a parcel or package from a high risk area where COVID-19 has been reported?

Yes, the likelihood of an infected person contaminating commercial goods is low and the risk of catching the virus that causes COVID-19 from a package that has been moved, travelled, and exposed to different conditions and temperature is also low.

How long does the coronavirus live on external surfaces or objects for?

Not enough research has been conducted as yet, however initial studies indicate that it can live beyond a few hours on certain surfaces.

Three proactive ways to channel COVID-19 concerns

Protect yourself

Wash your hand regularly with plenty of soap and water.

Keep an alcohol-based sanitizer ready for times when soap and water are not available.

Don't touch your eyes, mouth or nose with unclean hands.

Keep your distance of at least one metre from anyone coughing or sneezing.

Follow no-touch greeting guidelines.

Protect your family

Don't sneeze or cough into your hands.

Use a tissue and throw it away immediately, or sneeze in the inner side of your elbow.

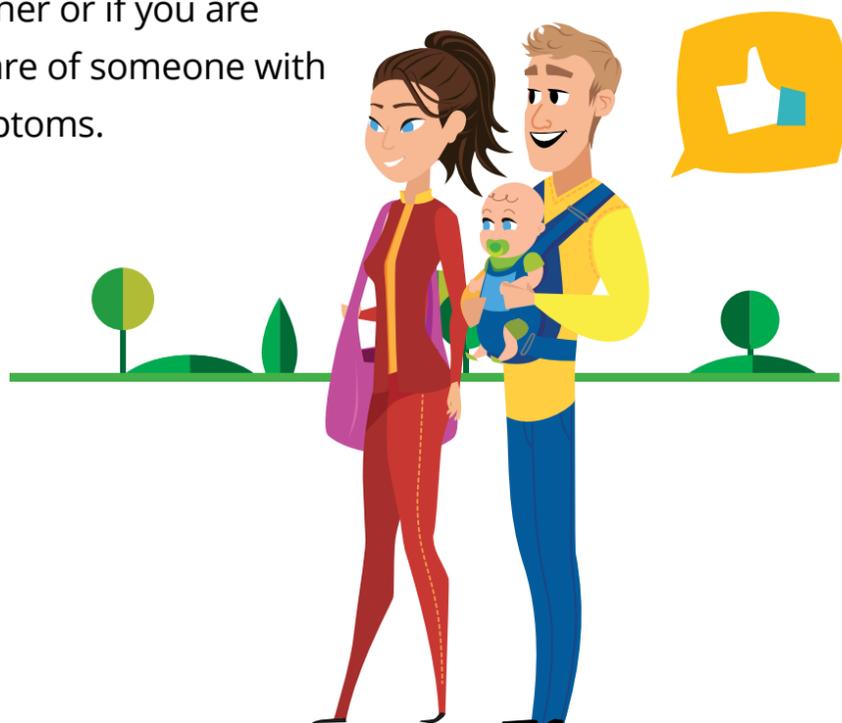
Practice social distancing and don't travel or visit crowded places if you're sick.

Only wear a mask if you are confirmed to be sick with COVID-19 by a medical practitioner or if you are taking care of someone with the symptoms.

Protect your colleagues & your community

If you feel ill, call your healthcare practitioner and follow their advice.

Only share authentic information from trusted official sources.

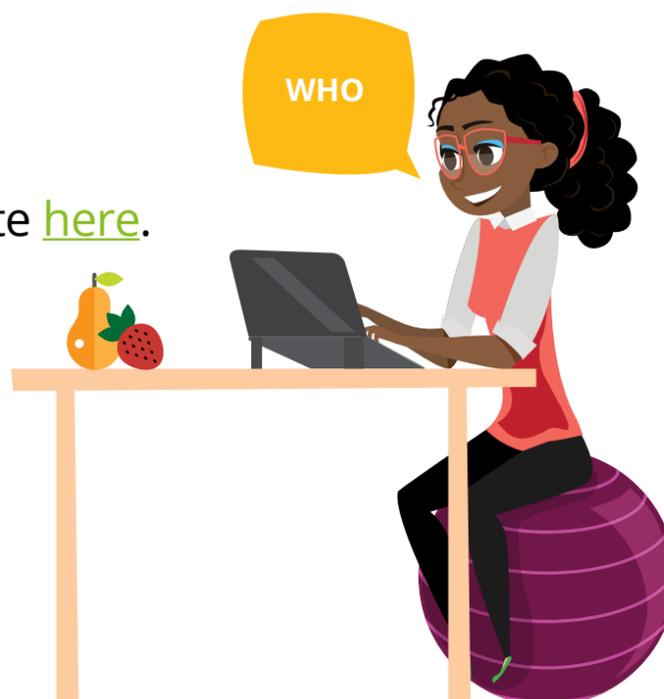


For more information:

Visit the World Health Organisation's (WHO) website [here](#).

Visit the South Africa Health Department's COVID-19 resource portal [here](#).

Visit the National Institute for Communicable Diseases' (NICD) website [here](#).





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