

# 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

February 27, 2020

A new infectious disease known as COVID-19 (2019 Novel Coronavirus) was first detected in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China. This viral infection has resulted in thousands of confirmed human infections, with the vast majority of cases in China. Other countries, including the United States, have identified a growing number of cases in people who have traveled to China. More recently, transmission has been noted in some countries that has not been directly linked to cases in China, indicating community-level transmission in some places.

## How does coronavirus spread?

Coronaviruses are respiratory viruses and are generally spread through respiratory secretions (such as droplets from coughs and sneezes) of an infected person to another person. Information about how this novel coronavirus spreads is still limited.

## What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

This coronavirus causes a respiratory (lung) infection. Symptoms of this infection include:

- fever
- coughing
- shortness of breath
- in severe cases, pneumonia (infection in the lungs).

While most people recover from this infection, some infections can lead to severe disease or death. Older people and those with pre-existing medical problems seem to have a greater risk for severe disease.

## What are the treatments? Is there a vaccine?

There is no specific antiviral treatment for COVID-19, other than supportive care and relief of symptoms. Currently, there is no vaccine available to protect people from infection with the virus that causes COVID-19.

## How can I protect myself?

Although risk to Massachusetts residents from COVID-19 is low, the same precautions to help prevent colds and the flu can help protect against other respiratory viruses:

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes.
- Stay home if you are sick.

## Should I wear a mask when I go out in public?

The health risk to Massachusetts residents remains low and we are not recommending that people wear masks when they are in public. Masks can be useful to prevent someone who has a respiratory illness from spreading it to others but there is no hard evidence that wearing a mask protects the wearer outside of the healthcare setting.



## How do you test a person for COVID-19?

Testing for the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 is only available through the Massachusetts State Public Health Laboratory and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Any healthcare provider who suspects a person is infected with 2019 Novel Coronavirus should call the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to discuss testing, at (617) 983-6800.

## Should I be tested for COVID-19?

Only those who have been in a place where COVID-19 is occurring, or have had close contact with someone who has it, and are experiencing flu-like symptoms, should be tested.

## What should I do if I have visited a place where COVID-19 is occurring or if I had close contact with someone who has it?

As of February 3, 2020, if you have been in China, or you have had close contact with someone who has the virus, you may be asked to avoid contact with other people (“quarantine”), depending on your likelihood of exposure. You should also:

- Monitor your health for 14 days after your last possible exposure.
- Watch for these signs and symptoms:
  - a. fever
  - b. coughing
  - c. shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Other early symptoms could be chills, body aches, sore throat, headache, diarrhea, nausea/vomiting, and runny nose.
- If you develop **any of these symptoms**, call your healthcare provider.
- Before going to your medical appointment, be sure to tell your healthcare provider about your possible exposure to COVID-19.

## Where can I learn more about COVID-19?

For updated information, visit the DPH website: [www.mass.gov/2019coronavirus](http://www.mass.gov/2019coronavirus).

More detailed information and additional guidance is available from the CDC at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus>.

## For questions

Contact your doctor, clinic, or local board of health (in the phonebook under Local Government).

Contact the DPH Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences at (617) 983-6800.

