

# TIP SHEET: THE NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) AND YOU

## WHAT IS THE 2019 NOVEL CORONAVIRUS?

The 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is a new virus that causes respiratory illness in people and can spread from person to person. This virus was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China. Currently, there are known cases of individuals being infected with COVID-19 in over 100 countries around the world and is continually increasing.

## COVID-19 IN THE US

Currently, there are confirmed cases in the US, including some deaths related to the illness. However, risk of infection is dependent on exposure. Close contacts of people who are infected are at greater risk of exposure, for example health care workers and close contacts of people who are infected with COVID-19. It has also been shown that older individuals and those who have serious chronic medical conditions, such as heart disease, diabetes or lung disease, are most at risk of contracting COVID-19.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) continues to closely monitor the situation.

## HOW DOES COVID-19 SPREAD?

This virus probably originally emerged from an animal source but now seems to be spreading from person to person. It's important to note that person-to-person spread can happen on a continuum. Some viruses are highly contagious (like measles), while other viruses are less so. At this time, it's unclear how easily or sustainably this virus is spreading between people.

It may also be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. There are now also accounts of 'community spread' which indicates that people have been infected with the virus in a local area, with some infected individuals not knowing how they contracted the illness.

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19?

Patients with COVID-19 have reportedly had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Many patients with severe complications have pneumonia in both lungs

## HOW CAN I HELP PROTECT MYSELF?

The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to this virus. Otherwise, there are simple everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses. These include the following:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

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- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

## HOW CAN I HELP PROTECT OTHERS?

If you are sick, to keep from spreading respiratory illness to others, you should follow these tips:

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

## IS THERE A VACCINE?

There is currently no vaccine to protect against COVID-19. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to this virus.

## IS THERE A TREATMENT?

There is no specific antiviral treatment for COVID-19. People with COVID-19 can seek medical care to help relieve symptoms.

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*Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD), Division of Viral Diseases. (Revised 2020, February 6). Novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and you. Retrieved February 12, 2020, from <https://www.cdc.gov>*