



About coronaviruses

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Some cause illness in people and others cause illness in animals. Human coronaviruses are common and are typically associated with mild illnesses, similar to the common cold. COVID-19 is a new disease that has not been previously identified in humans.

Symptoms of COVID-19

Those who are infected with COVID-19 may have little to no symptoms. You may not know you have symptoms of COVID-19 because they are similar to a cold or flu.

Symptoms may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to COVID-19. This is the longest known incubation period for this disease. Symptoms have included:

- Cough
- Fever
- difficulty breathing
- pneumonia in both lungs

In severe cases, infection can lead to death.

If you become ill

If you are showing symptoms of COVID-19, reduce your contact with others:

- **isolate** yourself at home for 14 days to avoid spreading it to others
 - if you live with others, stay in a separate room or keep a 2-metre distance
- visit a health care professional or call your local **public health authority**
 - call ahead to tell them your symptoms and follow their instructions

If you become sick while travelling back to Canada:

- inform the flight attendant or a Canadian border services officer
- advise a Canada border services agent on arrival in Canada if you believe you were exposed to someone who was sick with COVID-19, even if you do not have symptoms
 - this is required under the Quarantine Act
 - the Canada border services agent will provide instructions for you to follow



Treating coronavirus

Most people with mild coronavirus illness will recover on their own. If you are concerned about your symptoms, you should self-monitor and consult your health care provider.

Self-monitoring means to:

- monitor yourself for 14 days for symptoms of respiratory illness, such as cough, fever and difficulty breathing
- avoid crowded places and increase your personal space from others whenever possible

If you develop symptoms, isolate yourself from others immediately and contact your public health authority as soon as possible.

Self-isolate if you:

- have no symptoms and
- have travelled outside of Canada within the last 14 days or
- have come in close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 or
- have been asked to do so by your public health authority

Self-isolation means to:

- stay at home and monitor yourself for symptoms, even if mild, for 14 days
- avoid contact with others

If you have no symptoms but have been exposed to COVID-19, you can still go outside for:

- fresh air
- a run
- a bike ride
- to walk the dog

While doing these activities, always maintain a distance of at least 2 arms-length (approximately 2 metres) from others.

If you develop symptoms, even if mild, stay home, avoid other people and contact your public health authority as soon as possible.

Vaccine

At this time, there is no vaccine for COVID-19 or any natural health products that are authorized to treat or protect against COVID-19. If you have received a flu vaccine, it will not protect against coronaviruses.



How coronavirus spreads

Human coronaviruses cause infections of the nose, throat and lungs. They are most commonly spread from an infected person through:

- respiratory droplets generated when you cough or sneeze
- close, prolonged personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
- touching something with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands

Current evidence suggests person-to-person spread is efficient when there is close contact.

Preventing coronavirus

Canadians should continue to think ahead about the actions that they can take to stay healthy and prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Canada, including:

- [being prepared](#) in case you or a family member become ill
- following the latest [travel advice](#) from federal and provincial public health leaders:
 - [avoiding all non-essential travel](#), including [cruise ships](#)
 - self-isolating, and monitoring for symptoms (cough, fever or difficulty breathing) for 14 days if you have travelled outside of Canada
- reducing contact with others by following the guidance for [self-monitoring, self-isolating, or isolating](#)
- practicing [social distancing](#) and [proper hygiene](#)
- [wearing masks](#), if necessary

Social distancing

Together, we can slow the spread of COVID-19 by making a conscious effort to keep a physical distance between each other. [Social distancing](#) is proven to be one of the most effective ways to reduce the spread of illness during an outbreak.

This means making changes in your everyday routines to minimize close contact with others, including:

- avoiding crowded places and non-essential gatherings
- avoiding common greetings, such as handshakes
- limiting contact with people at higher risk like older adults and those in poor health



- keeping a distance of at least 2 arms-length (approximately 2 metres) from others

Hygiene

Proper hygiene can help reduce the risk of infection or spreading infection to others:

- wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after using the washroom and when preparing food
 - use alcohol-based [hand sanitizer](#) if soap and water are not available
- when coughing or sneezing:
 - cough or sneeze into a tissue or the bend of your arm, not your hand
 - dispose of any tissues you have used as soon as possible in a lined waste basket and wash your hands afterwards
- avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands

Cleaning

Health Canada recommends cleaning often, using either regular household cleaners or diluted bleach (1 part bleach to 9 parts water) the following high-touch surfaces:

- toys
- toilets
- phones
- electronics
- door handles
- bedside tables
- television remotes

Wearing masks

If you are a healthy individual, the use of a mask is not recommended for preventing the spread of COVID-19.

Wearing a mask when you are not ill may give a false sense of security. There is a potential risk of infection with improper mask use and disposal. They also need to be changed frequently.

However, your health care provider may recommend you wear a mask if you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 while you are seeking or waiting for care. In this instance, masks are an appropriate part of infection prevention



and control measures. The mask acts as a barrier and helps stop the tiny droplets from spreading you when you cough or sneeze.

Risks of getting coronavirus

COVID-19 is a serious health threat, and the situation is evolving daily. The risk will vary between and within communities, but given the increasing number of cases in Canada, the risk to Canadians is considered high.

This does not mean that all Canadians will get the disease. It means that there is already a significant impact on our health care system. If we do not flatten the epidemic curve now, the increase of COVID-19 cases could impact health care resources available to Canadians.

The risk for COVID-19 may be increased for certain settings such as:

- crowded areas (such as public transit and shopping centres)
- gatherings (spiritual and cultural settings, theatres, sports arenas, festivals and conferences)

There is an increased risk of more severe outcomes for Canadians:

- ❖ aged 65 and over
- ❖ with compromised immune systems
- ❖ with underlying medical conditions

People that fall into these categories should reconsider attending gatherings. This includes large gatherings and even smaller events in crowded or enclosed settings.

If you have symptoms (cough, fever or difficulty breathing), do not attend a mass gathering, event or places where people gather. You could put someone whose health is vulnerable at risk.

Travellers

The risk for getting COVID-19 may be increased for travellers. Canadians are advised to avoid all non-essential travel. If you must travel, check the latest travel advice before you leave.

Pregnant women

Throughout pregnancy, women experience changes in their bodies that may increase the risk of some illnesses, including viral respiratory infections, such as the flu. At this time, there is insufficient evidence to suggest that pregnant women are at a greater risk for more serious outcomes related to COVID-19.



It is always important for pregnant women to protect themselves from illnesses and take the appropriate steps to avoid and prevent infection. Proper hygiene can help reduce the risk of getting an infection or spreading infection to others.

If you are pregnant and concerned about COVID-19, speak to your health care provider.

Survival of coronaviruses on surfaces

It is not certain how long COVID-19 survives on surfaces, but it seems to behave like other coronaviruses. Preliminary information on COVID-19 suggests that the virus may persist on surfaces for a few hours or up to several days depending on different conditions, such as:

- temperature
- type of surface
- humidity of the environment

Surfaces frequently touched with hands are most likely to be contaminated, including:

- tables
- handrails
- doorknobs
- electronics
- countertops
- light switches
- faucet handles
- cabinet handles
- elevator buttons

Products shipped within or from outside of Canada could also be contaminated. However, because parcels generally take days or weeks to be delivered, and are shipped at room temperature, the risk of spread is low. There is no known risk of coronaviruses entering Canada on parcels or packages.

To protect yourself from COVID-19, make sure to do the following when handling products shipped within or outside of Canada:

- use good [hygiene measures](#)
- [regularly clean and disinfect surfaces](#)
- do not touch your eyes, nose and mouth



Food

There is currently no evidence to suggest that food is a likely source or route of transmission of the virus and there are currently no reported cases of COVID 19 transmission through food. People are unlikely to be infected with the virus through food.

Scientists and food safety authorities across the world are closely monitoring the spread of COVID-19.

Coronaviruses are killed by [common cleaning and disinfection methods](#) and by cooking food to [safe internal temperatures](#).

Animals in Canada

The current spread of COVID-19 is a result of human-to-human transmission. There is no evidence to suggest that pets or other animals play a role in transmitting the disease to humans. Scientists are still trying to understand if and how it affects animals.

Pets can contribute to our overall happiness and well-being, especially in times of stress. If you are feeling well (no symptoms of COVID-19) and are not self-isolating because of COVID-19 illness, you can continue to take walks with your dog or spend time with your pet.

As a precautionary measure, if you have COVID-19 [symptoms](#) or are [self-isolating](#) due to contact with a COVID-19 case, you should follow similar recommendations around animals, as you would around people in these circumstances:

- avoid close contact with animals during your illness
 - practise good handwashing and avoid coughing and sneezing on your animals
 - do not visit farms or have contact with livestock
 - if possible, have another member of your household care for your animals
 - if this is not possible, always wash your hands before and after touching animals, their food and supplies and practise good cough and sneezing etiquette
 - limit your animal's contact with other people and animals outside the household until your illness is resolved
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Reference: [Government of Canada Website](#).