

SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19/Coronavirus: Basic Information for Families



SARS-CoV-2 is a virus

- A virus is a tiny organism that can make people sick
- Some viruses are mild (like the common cold) while others are more serious (like Ebola)
- Once a person has had a virus, it stays in their bodies even after they've recovered
- SARS-CoV-2 stands for Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2- it is the virus that causes coronavirus disease (COVID-19)
- There are other coronaviruses that cause other diseases, including the common cold



SARS-CoV-2 is mostly spread by droplets from people with symptoms

- When someone who has SARS-CoV-2 coughs, sneezes or exhales (e.g., a big laugh or sigh), germs are expelled into the air and onto surfaces
- Someone can catch SARS-CoV-2 by:
 - Breathing in the germs (seems to be the easiest way to catch this virus)
 - Touching a surface with those germs on it (like a doorknob)
 - Touching their face after having contact with the germs (e.g., rubbing their eyes after opening a door)



COVID-19 is a respiratory infection with mild to moderate symptoms for most people



- COVID-19 has symptoms that look like the flu or a respiratory infection
 - Fever
 - Dry cough
 - Fatigue
 - Shortness of breath
- Doctors and scientists are still learning about COVID-19- we do not have all the facts



Certain people have a higher risk of experiencing serious symptoms

- While symptoms of COVID-19 are mild to moderate for most people, certain people have a greater risk of developing serious symptoms resulting in intensive care, use of ventilator and/or death:
 - Older adults
 - People with certain health conditions:
 - Diabetes
 - Lung disease
 - Heart disease
 - Kidney disease
 - Cancer
 - People with compromised immune systems (e.g., people with HIV, people who have had an organ transplant)



What are the risks of COVID-19 for pregnant women, infants and children?



- Right now, it is unclear if pregnant women have an increased risk of developing COVID-19 (severe or otherwise)
- Children appear to be at a decreased risk of developing severe COVID-19
- So far, the few babies born to mothers with COVID-19 have not tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 but we do not know about risks to babies whose mothers have COVID-19

SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19/Coronavirus: Addressing Myths for Families

SARS-CoV-2 does not discriminate based on race, ethnicity or geography



- The virus **does not** target certain racial or ethnic groups- neither should we!
 - People of **all** racial and ethnic backgrounds can have and transmit SARS-CoV-2
 - Just because someone has a particular racial/ethnic background **does not** mean they have SARS-CoV-2
- The virus is being transmitted throughout the world **and** throughout the United States
- The virus can survive and be transmitted regardless of the temperature outside or the things people do to change their body temperature (e.g., taking hot showers)
 - There is not evidence that heat/humidity or cold/snow prevent or kill the virus

Not everyone with respiratory or flu-like symptoms has SARS-CoV-2

- It is always important to use germ-hygiene and contact precautions when we are around people who have an easy-to-catch illness
- Symptoms of COVID-19 overlap with symptoms of the common cold, hay fever (allergic rhinitis) and the flu
- Not everyone who clears their throat or coughs has a communicable illness!
 - Other reasons include allergen exposure, asthma, swallowing "funny"



Recent travel does not guarantee someone has SARS-CoV-2



- People who have traveled recently may be at increased risk of having been in contact with someone with SARS-CoV-2
 - Airports, airplanes, trains, stations, etc. tend to be crowded with people coming and going from various places
 - There is a greater risk of SARS-CoV-2 for people who have traveled to/from countries with large outbreaks of COVID-19 ("Level 3 Countries")

People who have completed quarantine or who have been released from isolation do not pose a risk to others

- Some people have been quarantined or placed in isolation (e.g., people who tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, recently traveled to a Level 3 Country, have been in close contact with someone with SARS-CoV2, etc.)
- Once someone has completed quarantine or has been released from isolation, they are safe to be around
- Shunning or rejecting people who have completed quarantine or who have been released from isolation discriminates against them



Right now, there is not a vaccine for SARS-CoV-2 and there are no medications/treatments that have proven effective for COVID-19



- Since SARS-CoV-2 is a virus, antibiotics are not helpful
- Some people who develop COVID-19 get secondary bacterial infections
 - Doctors may prescribe antibiotics to treat these secondary infections
- Medical researchers are working to develop a vaccine for COVID-19 and identify anti-viral medications that may effectively treat the illness



SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19/Coronavirus: Tips for Families

Talk with your kids about this illness in a developmentally appropriate way

- Use your child's age to guide the amount and specificity of information you share
- Focus on basic facts about viruses and about this particular illness
 - This virus is most often transmitted by "droplets" (germs expelled by exhaling, laughing, coughing or sneezing)
 - People with COVID-19 generally have symptoms like cough, fatigue and fever
- Discuss their relative risk and safety
 - Most kids and teens seem to have a decreased risk of developing severe COVID-19, so if they got sick, it would likely be similar to being sick with the flu
 - It is still important for us to take this virus seriously- when we use good hygiene and precautions, we keep ourselves and others safe
 - Staying healthy and "following the rules" decreases the risk of exposure for people who are vulnerable to developing severe COVID-19



Encourage and model appropriate hand washing

- Wash hands with antibacterial soap and water for 20 seconds
- Singing "Happy Birthday" twice is about 20 seconds
- Scrub the top and bottom of hands, between fingers and under the nails
- Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to clean hands
- Rubbing in 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer for 20 seconds is an acceptable option if hands are not visibly dirty or greasy



Model appropriate precautions

- Minimize droplets by coughing and sneezing "like a vampire" (i.e., cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve/elbow like Dracula stretching his cape in front of his face)
- Avoid kissing others on the mouth or in the face
- Avoid touching your face and wash your hands if you slip up!
- Encourage your child to keep their distance (physically) from others- around 6 feet
 - Remind them to avoid getting in each other's faces when playing with others
- Avoid close-talking and whispering in people's ears
- If you are supposed to be quarantined or in isolation, stay put and minimize your contact with others!
- Minimize unnecessary contact with people who have symptoms that could be consistent with possible SARS-CoV-2
- Avoid crowds and non-essential social gatherings to the extent that it is possible



Model an appropriate response to this pandemic

- Avoid excessively watching or talking about the news- especially in front of your child
- Minimize panic and panic buying- make sure you have the medications, food and household items that you and your family need
- Do not enlist your child in "pandemic preparations" (e.g., do not have them call area stores searching for face masks and hand sanitizer)
- Avoid saying or doing things that suggest it is okay to discriminate against others (due to racial/ethnic background, travel, physical health symptoms, SARS-CoV-2, diagnosis, after someone completes quarantine/isolation, etc.)
- "Follow the rules" and comply with government mandates

