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# COVID-19 Pandemic

A novel coronavirus which was first detected late December 2019 in the city of Wuhan in the Hubei Province in China, has been shaking the entire world as it continues to spread across continents. Assist America has compiled all important information, health and travel updates regarding the ongoing pandemic.

## What is a coronavirus?

Coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses found in both animals and humans. Some infect people and are known to cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), and the ongoing novel coronavirus referred to as COVID-19.

This novel coronavirus is a new strain of coronavirus that had not been previously identified in humans before the first outbreak was reported in Wuhan, China in December 2019.

Scientists in China announced on March 4th to have identified two separate strains of COVID-19: a more aggressive type and a lesser one. The more aggressive strain was found in early cases from Wuhan, China, where the coronavirus originated from, and researchers think it may have evolved from the less aggressive type.

## How is the virus transmitted?

Much remains unknown about COVID-19. Current knowledge is largely based on what is known about similar coronaviruses and primary analysis of confirmed cases. The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person, between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet / 2 meters).

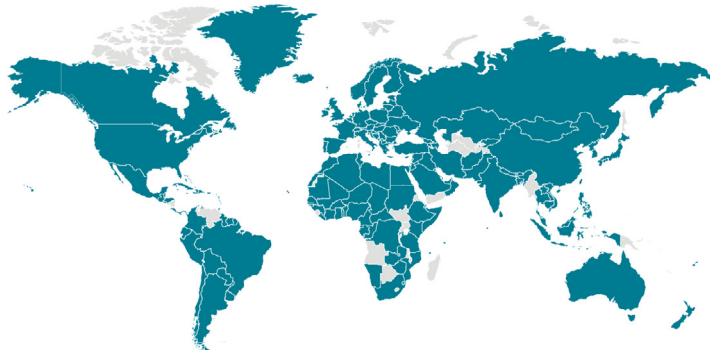
The spread is thought to occur mainly via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes, similar to how influenza and other respiratory pathogens spread. These droplets can land in or near the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest). Some spread might be

## Locations with Confirmed COVID-19 Cases

As of 12:00 p.m. ET March 27, 2020

Source: CDC



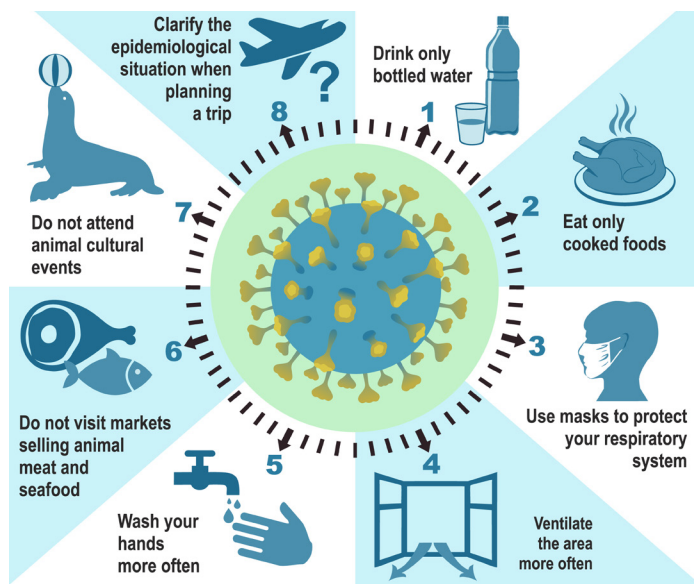
possible before people show symptoms; there have been reports of this occurring with this new coronavirus, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

It may 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.

While most cases at the beginning of the crisis had direct links with international travel, new cases now appear to have no such links. According to scientists, this suggests the virus that causes COVID-19 seems to be spreading easily and sustainably across the community.

### What are the symptoms and treatment?

Symptoms of the virus are closely related to those of the common cold with mild to moderate upper-respiratory tract illnesses and a general feeling of being unwell. Common signs of infection include:



In the majority of cases, patients experience mild flu-like symptoms, and some barely show any signs of infection. In more severe cases, an infection can cause lower-respiratory tract illnesses such as pneumonia or bronchitis, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure, or, in extreme cases, death.

There is no specific antiviral treatment recommended for COVID-19 infection. People infected with COVID-19 should receive supportive care to help relieve symptoms. For severe cases, treatment should include the support of vital organ functions.

### Who should be concerned about COVID-19?

It is important to note that most cases of COVID-19 remain mild and are not life-threatening. However, people over age 60, and particularly those with pre-existing health conditions, appear to be most vulnerable to the virus. These pre-existing conditions include:

- Respiratory diseases

- Cardiopulmonary diseases
- Weakened immune system and immunodeficiency disorders
- Chronic diseases such as asthma, diabetes or heart disease

In addition, the more exposure people have with the virus the more at-risk they are of becoming infected. Therefore, healthcare workers, people who have traveled and those who are currently still in areas with confirmed outbreaks should be extremely cognizant of the symptoms, adjust their daily routine accordingly and observe quarantine measures as recommended by their home or host country's authorities, as applicable.

### Can COVID-19 be prevented?

There is currently no vaccine or preventive treatment against COVID-19. The best way to protect yourself from contamination is to avoid exposure to the virus. To do so, apply strict hygiene and social distancing measures such as:

- Maintain at least 3 feet (about 1 meter) between you and other people, particularly those who show cold-like symptoms such as sneezing, coughing and congestion.
- Wash your hands carefully with soap and water or an alcohol-based sanitizer.
- Cover your mouth and nose with your arm or a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Discard the tissue immediately into a closed bin and wash hands.
- Avoid touching your mouth and eyes.
- Avoid consumption and handling of raw or undercooked animal products.
- Do not shake hands, hug and/or kiss people to greet them.

### What Should I Do if I Think I Have Been Exposed to or Infected with COVID-19?

If you think you have been exposed or develop mild symptoms:

- Alert your healthcare provider immediately and share your recent travel or close contact history.
- Isolate yourself from others at home and use a separate bathroom if available.
- Put on a medical mask and practice good sneeze/cough and hand hygiene.
- If you are working and have been to your workplace in the last 14 days, alert your employer.

If you have serious symptoms such as difficulty breathing, call the local emergency dispatch number for immediate medical attention and go to the nearest emergency room.

### When should self-quarantine be considered?

To help limit the spread of coronavirus, quarantine is recommended in the following circumstances:

- If you've traveled or transited through a country or region with a known outbreak of COVID-19.



- If you have been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19.
- If you are showing symptoms, completely isolate yourself at home until test results are available.

If you fall under one of these scenarios, you will need to self-quarantine at your house or in your hotel room for 14 days. If you must leave home, such as to seek medical care, apply extreme caution and wear a face mask.

You should abide by the directions mandated by your local government. Many countries have established or recommend all non-essential employees to stay at home and follow social-distancing and isolation measures.

### Can I still travel?

It is currently recommended to avoid all non-essential travel, either domestic or international. The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) provides recommendations on postponing or canceling travel. These are called travel notices and are based on assessment of the potential health risks involved with traveling to a certain area. A list of destinations with travel notices is available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>.



Travelers who are stranded in a foreign country should contact their embassy to inquire about repatriation plans. Most governments are working with their national airlines to schedule flights to get their citizens and legal residents back home.



The CDC recommends travelers to defer all cruise ship travel at this time. Cruises put large numbers of people, often from countries around the world, in frequent and close contact with each other. This can promote the spread of respiratory viruses, such as the virus that causes COVID-19. You may get sick from close contact with an infected person or by touching contaminated surfaces. Following this recommendation, most cruise lines have voluntarily halted their operations until the end of April.

For more information regarding the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, visit Assist America's dedicated web-page at [www.assistamerica.com/covid-19](http://www.assistamerica.com/covid-19). For further details regarding country-specific travel restriction, visit [www.assistamerica.com/COVID-19-travel-restrictions](http://www.assistamerica.com/COVID-19-travel-restrictions).



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