



# Coronavirus facts, myths and information: Your questions, answered



## You asked, we're answering: Your top coronavirus questions

By [Holly Yan](#) and Scottie Andrew, CNN  
CNN's Harmeet Kaur, Jeanne Sahadi and Kathryn Vasel contributed to this report.

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If you have a question about coronavirus we haven't answered, [ask us here](#). You can also [subscribe to our newsletter](#), Coronavirus: Fact or Fiction, or [listen to Dr. Sanjay Gupta's podcast](#) to learn more.

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**Q: When will social distancing end? Could life start getting back to normal by Easter, like President Trump suggested?**

**A:** Probably not, medical experts say.

President Donald Trump said [he's hoping church pews could be packed by Easter](#), which is April 12.

But that's actually around the same time [deaths from coronavirus will be peaking in the US](#), a leading epidemiologist and CDC adviser estimates.

Many doctors say they believe social distancing guidelines will or should stay in effect.

"Our modelers suggest that in Boston, we will probably be in the thick of it in the middle to late of April," said Dr. Rochelle Walensky, chief of infectious disease at Massachusetts General Hospital.

"If we are in the thick of it, it will be very clear we're not going to be able to recongregate at that time. ... If we thought so, we wouldn't have sent all our kids home from college."

Work/Life

Myths & Misinformation

**Q: Can coronavirus spread through water, like in a pool or hot tub?**

**A:** While many gyms are closed, some members wonder if it'll be safe to get in the water once facilities re-open.

"There is no evidence that COVID-19 can be spread to humans through the use of pools and hot tubs," the CDC says. "Proper operation, maintenance, and disinfection (e.g., with chlorine and bromine) of pools and hot tubs should remove or inactivate the virus that causes COVID-19."

For now, health officials still advise staying at least 6 feet away from others, since COVID-19 is a respiratory infection.

As for drinking water, doctors say you don't need to worry about coronavirus in the tap

water because [most municipal drinking water systems should remove or inactivate the virus](#).

Transmission

Work/Life

**Q: Can high or low temperatures kill coronavirus?**

**A:** “Generally coronaviruses survive for shorter periods of time at higher temperatures and higher humidity than in cooler or dryer environments. However, we don’t have direct data for this virus, nor do we have direct data for a temperature-based cutoff for inactivation at this point,” the [CDC](#) says.

“The necessary temperature would also be based on the materials of the surface, the environment, etc.”

President Donald Trump [suggested this coronavirus could subside by the warmer summer months](#), but scientists say [it’s too early to tell](#). And the fact that coronavirus is [spreading in the Southern Hemisphere during its summer months](#) indicates this strain might not succumb to warmer temperatures.

“The short answer is that while we may expect modest declines in the contagiousness of (novel coronavirus) in warmer, wetter weather and perhaps with the closing of schools ... it is not reasonable to expect these declines alone to slow transmission enough to make a big dent,” wrote [Dr. Marc Lipsitch](#), director of the Center for Communicable Disease Dynamics at Harvard’s T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

Transmission

Myths & Misinformation

**Q: Can mosquitoes transmit coronavirus?**

**A:** No. “To date there has been no information nor evidence to suggest that the new coronavirus could be transmitted by mosquitoes,” the [World Health Organization](#) says.

“The new coronavirus is a respiratory virus which spreads primarily through droplets generated when an infected person coughs or sneezes, or through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose.”

Transmission

Myths & Misinformation

**Q: Why is everyone stocking up on bottled water? Is the water supply at risk?**

**A:** No, the water supply is not at risk.

“The COVID-19 virus has not been detected in drinking water,” the [CDC](#) says. “Conventional water treatment methods that use filtration and disinfection, such as those in most municipal drinking water systems, should remove or inactivate the virus that causes COVID-19.”

So there is no need to hoard drinking water, said Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. Fauci said he and his wife are still drinking tap water.

Work/Life

Myths & Misinformation

**Q: My child's school is closed, and now we need a babysitter. How do I keep my family safe with someone new in the house?**

**A:** [The Harvard Medical School](#) offers several tips, including:

- choosing a babysitter who has minimal exposures to other people besides your family
- limiting the number of babysitters. If you can keep it to one, that's ideal. But if you need multiple babysitters, keep the number as low as possible
- making sure the babysitter understands he or she needs to practice social distancing and limits physical interaction with your children as much as possible
- telling the babysitter that he or she must not come to your house if feeling even the slightest bit sick, or has had known exposure to coronavirus
- making sure everyone washes their hands frequently throughout the day, especially before eating.

Work/Life

Family

**Q: Is it safe to get takeout from restaurants?**

**A:** Yes, but you may want to wipe down the packaging and containers, just in case.

There's no evidence to suggest coronavirus is transmitted through food, [the CDC says](#). It's generally spread through respiratory droplets.

But it's a good idea to disinfect the takeout containers and wash your hands afterward, CNN Chief Medical Correspondent Dr. Sanjay Gupta said. He stressed that coronavirus is a respiratory virus, and it's easy to touch your face without realizing it.

Transmission

**Q: How long will we have to keep social distancing?**

**A:** Probably for several months. But you might have to do it "over and over again," since the outbreak could come in waves.

Research by the Imperial College in Great Britain "would suggest you have to institute these kinds of measures for five months, very vigorously," said Dr. Celine Gounder, an infectious disease specialist at Bellevue Hospital Center.

"And then you may be able to relax for a period. And then you would re-institute as the cases go up again. But we're basically looking at doing this over and over and over again, even after a five-month period of strict social distancing, in order to curb cases until we have a vaccine."

Health officials say we're at least a year away from the first publicly available [coronavirus vaccine](#). In the meantime, they say everyone should avoid large crowds and stay at least 6 feet away from others.

Transmission

**Q: How long does coronavirus stay "alive" on surfaces?**

**A:** Up to three days, depending on the surface. According to [a study funded by the US National Institutes of Health](#):

- The new coronavirus is viable up to 72 hours after being placed on stainless steel and plastic.
- It was viable up to four hours after being placed on copper, and up to 24 hours after being put on cardboard.
- In aerosols, it remained viable for three hours.

Transmission

**Q: Is it safe to go to the dentist?**

**A:** Unless you have an emergency, the American Dental Association suggests rescheduling imminent appointments.

The ADA has urged dentists nationwide to [postpone elective procedures until at least April 6](#).

“Concentrating on emergency dental care will allow us to care for our emergency patients and alleviate the burden that dental emergencies would place on hospital emergency departments,” ADA said in a March 16 statement.

Transmission

**Q: Is coronavirus more contagious than the flu?**

**A:** Yes.

Research indicates a person with the flu infects about 1.28 other people, on average, CNN Chief Medical Correspondent Dr. Sanjay Gupta said.

But with the novel coronavirus, he said, “it’s likely between two and three” other people.

Transmission

Family

**Q: If people can spread the virus without showing any symptoms, how can I tell who’s infected and who’s not?**

**A:** You can’t, said Dr. James Phillips, chief of disaster and operational medicine at George Washington University Hospital.

“We’re so far behind on testing, there’s only one way we can be certain not to transmit the virus and be certain not to get it ourselves,” Phillips said.

“We need to start treating every person as though they have this. And everyone needs to treat us like we have it, and socially distance ourselves in that manner. Because until we have testing, we don’t know who has this. And we’re not sure when they start spreading it.”

That’s why it’s so critical to avoid crowds, stay at least 6 feet away from others, wash or disinfect your hands, and stop touching your face.

Transmission

Travel

Work/Life

**Q: How do I safely take care of someone who’s sick?**

**A:** With the [shortage of coronavirus testing](#) nationwide, it may be difficult to know whether your loved one has coronavirus or another illness. So it's critical to play it safe and not infect yourself and, in turn, others. The CDC suggests:

- Giving the sick person their own room to stay in, if possible. Keep the door closed.
- Having only one person serve as the caretaker.
- Asking the sick person to wear a face mask, if they are able to. If the mask causes breathing difficulties, then the caretaker should wear a mask instead.

Officials say those who are healthy should not wear masks in public – in fact, that [can cause more harm than good](#).

“Face masks may be in short supply and they [should be saved for caregivers](#),” the CDC says.

Transmission

Family

**Q: What are the symptoms?**

**A:** Fever, dry cough and difficulty breathing are hallmarks of coronavirus.

Symptoms may appear anywhere from 2 days to 2 weeks after exposure, [the CDC says](#), though some patients haven't shown symptoms at all.

The illness varies in its severity, and many patients can recover at home in isolation.

[Older adults — ages 60 and older](#) — and people with severe chronic illness are more likely to get seriously sick from the coronavirus.

[Learn more about the difference between flu, coronavirus and allergy symptoms here.](#)

Transmission

**Q: How does it spread?**

**A:** It primarily spreads between people through respiratory droplets — think coughs, sneezes, spittle.

You can also get coronavirus by touching infected surfaces, then touching your mouth, eyes or nose.

[Learn how to not touch your face here.](#)

Transmission

**Q: How can someone pass along coronavirus when asymptomatic? If not sneezing or coughing, how can they infect others?**

**A:** It's easy for asymptomatic people with coronavirus to spread the illness, said Dr. Anne Rimoin, an epidemiology professor at UCLA's School of Public Health.

“Certainly when you speak, sometimes you'll spit a little bit,” Rimoin said. “You'll rub your nose. You'll touch your mouth. You'll rub your eyes. And then you'll touch other surfaces, and then you will be spreading virus if you are infected and shedding asymptotically.”

Doctors stress that the best way to prevent getting coronavirus is not by wearing face masks, since [they often cause more harm than good](#).

Instead, people should wash their hands with [soap and water frequently for at least 20 seconds](#) and stop touching their faces – [which is harder than it sounds](#).

Transmission

**Q: Can you get coronavirus through food?**

**A:** There is no evidence to support that coronavirus is transmitted through food, [the CDC says](#). It's generally thought to be spread from person-to-person through respiratory droplets.

“In general, because of poor survivability of these coronaviruses on surfaces, there is likely very low risk of spread from food products or packaging that are shipped over a period of days or weeks at ambient, refrigerated, or frozen temperatures.”

Transmission

Myths & Misinformation

**Q: Can coronavirus go through skin and into the body?**

**A:** “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,” [the CDC says](#).

More often than not, people get coronavirus through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

“These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs,” the CDC says.

Transmission

**Q: How long is someone contagious after getting coronavirus?**

**A:** It varies. Decisions about when a person can be released from isolation are made on a case-by-case basis.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [issued guidelines](#) for when it is OK to release someone from isolation. They include meeting all of these requirements:

- The patient is free from fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- The patient is no longer showing [symptoms, including cough](#).
- The patient has tested negative on at least two consecutive respiratory specimens collected at least 24 hours apart.

“Someone who has been released from isolation is not considered to pose a risk of infection to others,” the CDC says.

Transmission

**Q: Do I need to wear a mask to prevent coronavirus?**

**A:** If you're healthy, no. If you have the coronavirus or if you're a family member or health worker caring for a coronavirus patient, you can.

Infectious disease experts are pleading with the healthy public to [stop buying surgical face masks](#), which aren't effective against coronavirus transmission, and N95 respirators, which should only be worn by medical professionals.

The worry is, if Americans have [bought up all the masks and respirators](#), there won't be enough for the health workers charged with treating coronavirus patients.

So if you need a mask because you're a coronavirus patient or live with a coronavirus patient, that's OK. But [if you're healthy, skip it](#).

Transmission

Treatment & Prevention

**Q: Can I get the flu and coronavirus at the same time?**

**A:** It's possible.

They share common symptoms, especially fever and cough. But many coronavirus patients suffer from shortness of breath, a hallmark of Covid-19. Other coronavirus patients show no symptoms.

[Learn more about how to tell the difference between the flu, coronavirus and allergies here.](#)

Transmission

**Q: When will this epidemic end?**

**A:** No one knows for sure. President Donald Trump [suggested this coronavirus could subside by the warmer summer months](#), but scientists say [it's too early to tell](#).

"The short answer is that while we may expect modest declines in the contagiousness of (novel coronavirus) in warmer, wetter weather and perhaps with the closing of schools ... it is not reasonable to expect these declines alone to slow transmission enough to make a big dent," wrote [Dr. Marc Lipsitch](#), director of the Center for Communicable Disease Dynamics at Harvard's T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

Transmission

Myths & Misinformation

Work/Life

**Q: No one from my family has been exposed to the virus, and no one is sick. Can we get together for a family dinner? There are 10 of us, ages 4 to 88.**

**A:** No one can say for sure that they haven't been exposed to the virus. Some carriers of coronavirus don't have any symptoms at all. But they can still pass on the virus without knowing it.

"We now know that [asymptomatic transmission likely \(plays\) an important role in spreading this virus](#)," said [Michael Osterholm](#), director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota.

He said it's "absolutely clear" that asymptomatic infection "surely can fuel a pandemic like this in a way that's going to make it very difficult to control."

[Read more: How can people spread coronavirus if they don't have any symptoms?](#)

Infectious disease experts say those older than 60 are at much higher risk of getting seriously ill if they're exposed to coronavirus.

If you must socialize, it's important to stay at least 6 feet away from others. Do not hug or kiss, wash your hands often for at least 20 seconds, and do not touch your face.

Family

**Q: What exactly does 'older' adults mean? What is the age threshold?**

**A:** The CDC says "[older adults](#)" and people with serious chronic medical conditions "[are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness](#)."

[Anyone over 60](#) and those with underlying health problems should try to avoid places with large crowds – such as movie theaters, busy malls and even religious services, infectious disease experts say.

"This ought to be top of mind for people over 60, and those with underlying health problems," said Dr. William Schaffner, a Vanderbilt University professor and longtime CDC adviser.

But why is age 60 often used as a threshold for those who need to be extra cautious?

"(The) average age of death for people from coronavirus is 80. Average age of people who need medical attention is age 60," [US Surgeon General Jerome Adams](#) said.

[Read more about what adults 60 and older should do to prevent coronavirus.](#)

Family

**Q: Are kids more at risk?**

**A:** "Younger people, thankfully, seem to be insulated to some extent to protect (them) from getting particularly sick from this," said CNN Chief Medical Correspondent Dr. Sanjay Gupta. "We don't know entirely why."

But while children might have mild to no symptoms with coronavirus, they [can still get others sick](#). "They can still carry the virus in their bodies," Gupta said. "They could potentially still shed the virus and be a source of infection."

Like everyone else, children should wash their hands [frequently for at least 20 seconds](#), stay at least 6 feet away from anyone coughing or sneezing, and stop touching their faces – [which is a lot harder than it sounds](#).

Family

**Q: Is coronavirus especially harmful for pregnant women?**

**A:** Long story short: There's not enough data yet, considering this coronavirus [just emerged in humans a few months ago](#).

The vulnerability of "older adults" has been well documented, but researchers "do not have information from published scientific reports about susceptibility of pregnant women" to this coronavirus, [the CDC says](#).

“Adverse infant outcomes” like premature births have been reported among infants born to mothers who’ve tested positive for coronavirus during pregnancy, the CDC says. But it’s not clear if these outcomes were related to maternal infection, so the risk is unknown.

Family

**Q: What can I do if my loved one suspects they have coronavirus?**

**A:** Don’t visit family members with suspected illness – keep up with them virtually. If that loved one lives with you, limit contact with them and avoid using the same bathroom or bedroom, [the CDC advises](#).

If they’ve been diagnosed, they may be able to recover at home in isolation. Separate yourself as much as possible from your infected family member and keep animals away, too. Continue to use separate restrooms and regularly disinfect them with [EPA-approved products](#).

[Stock up on groceries and household supplies](#) for them while they can’t travel outside and minimize trips to stores. Wash your hands frequently and avoid sharing personal items with the infected person.

If you suspect you’re developing symptoms, stay home and call your physician.

Family

**Q: Should I disinfect my groceries? If so, how?**

**A:** “I would suggest wiping down external surfaces of canned or wrapped foods,” said Dr. Celine Gounder, an infectious disease specialist at Bellevue Hospital Center.

“You should be washing your vegetables (and) produce anyway,” she said. “But I think making sure you sanitize your hands, wash your hands after you do all that – after you unpack all your groceries – is also a key step.”

Work/Life

**Q: The stores are all out of disinfectant sprays and hand sanitizer. Can I make my own?**

**A:** Yes, you can make your own disinfectant if you’re trying to kill coronavirus on a non-porous surface.

“Unexpired household bleach will be effective against coronaviruses when properly diluted,” the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said.

[The CDC’s recipe](#) calls for diluting 5 tablespoons (or 1/3 cup) of bleach per gallon of water, or 4 teaspoons of bleach per quart of water.

You can also make your own hand sanitizer. The Nebraska Medical Center – [famous for its biocontainment unit](#) and treatment of Ebola patients – [offers this recipe](#):

**What you’ll need:**

- 2/3 cup 91% isopropyl alcohol (rubbing alcohol)
- 1/3 cup aloe vera gel
- Mixing bowl

- Spoon or something for whisking
- Small container, such as a 3 oz. travel bottle
- Optional: essential oil to give your hand sanitizer a fragrance

**Directions:**

In a mixing bowl, stir isopropyl alcohol and aloe vera gel together until well blended. Add 8-10 drops of scented essential oil (optional, but nice!). Stir to incorporate. Pour the homemade hand sanitizer into an empty container and seal. Write "hand sanitizer" on a piece of masking tape and affix to the bottle.

Work/Life

Treatment & Prevention

**Q: Do I need to isolate myself if I'm not diagnosed?**

**A:** It depends.

Adults 60 and older and people with severe chronic illnesses are more likely to get very sick if they're infected with Covid-19, so the [CDC recommends](#) those people stay at home as much as possible if they live in communities where there are outbreaks.

Some communities, cities and even countries have issued wide quarantines to contain the virus, but if you don't live in one of those areas, use caution when going in public. Avoid crowds and poorly ventilated buildings, and frequently wash your hands before, during and after your trip out.

If you suspect you're sick, though, or have recently returned from an area where an outbreak has been reported, stay home.

Work/Life

Treatment & Prevention

**Q: Should I start stocking up on extra food and supplies?**

**A:** Yes, because a family member may suddenly have to quarantine. Just [don't buy out a store's inventory](#) — other people are looking to stock up, too.

[Harvard Medical School](#) recommends keeping a two-week to 30-day supply of nonperishable food at home. And if you don't use them now, they may come in handy for power outages or extreme weather.

It's also a good idea to keep at least a 30-day supply of prescription medications you may need, though it can be difficult to get them early. Consider [mail-ordering medications](#).

Work/Life

**Q: Should I avoid public transportation?**

**A:** If you rely on public transportation, use caution. If you're sick or live in an area where an outbreak has been reported, avoid it.

Mass transit could increase your risk of exposure to coronavirus. Luckily, transit systems are upping their cleaning regimens — notably the New York subway system.

Dr. Robyn Gershon, a professor of epidemiology at New York University's School of Public Health, [has some tips](#): When you ride a bus or subway, sneeze or cough into your elbow. Use a tissue to hold onto a pole. Avoid touching your face while you're riding, and use hand

sanitizer if you have it while you're commuting.

Again, wash your hands before, during and after your trip.

[New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo recommends](#) letting crowded trains or buses pass and waiting for a less crowded one. It's nearly impossible to maintain 6 feet of distance on a packed subway car.

If you have a chronic illness, find alternative means of transportation — being in a crowded subway car or bus will significantly increase your risk of infection.

Work/Life

**Q: Should I still attend community events?**

**A:** Maybe. Many Americans are still able to make this choice, but some communities have banned gatherings over a certain size.

Crowded venues are an opportunity for rapid spread. The CDC [recommends avoiding them, especially for older adults](#) and people with chronic illnesses, who are at a higher risk of infection.

If you do go to community events, stay cautious and wash your hands frequently.

Prepare for mass gatherings to be postponed or canceled. We've seen it happen already: The [NBA suspended the rest of the season](#). [Major festivals like Coachella](#) have been postponed. Some [places of worship](#) have canceled services indefinitely.

Many people are still able to attend local events, but prepare for this to change, too.

Work/Life

**Q: How do I stay healthy while using Uber or Lyft?**

**A:** Both rideshare companies said they're actively trying to protect customers and drivers from coronavirus.

Uber said it is trying to give drivers with disinfectants to help keep their cars clean, and the company "may temporarily suspend the accounts of riders or drivers confirmed to have contracted or been exposed to COVID-19."

Lyft announced a similar policy: "If we are notified of a rider or driver testing positive for COVID-19, they will be temporarily suspended from using Lyft until they are medically cleared."

Both Lyft and Uber also said they will protect drivers financially if they are asked to isolate themselves.

"Any driver or delivery person who is diagnosed with COVID-19 or is individually asked to self-isolate by a public health authority will receive financial assistance for up to 14 days while their account is on hold," Uber said.

"We've already helped drivers in some affected areas, and we're working to quickly implement this worldwide."

Work/Life

**Q: Is it safe for me to vote at a polling location?**

**A:** States have received [guidance from the CDC](#) on how to keep voting locations clean. It's up to you whether you feel comfortable going.

Many states that already held elections imposed measures to reduce contact between voters, increasing the distance between voting booths and rigorously disinfecting voting equipment. But if you go, remember – wash your hands before, during and afterward.

[Per the CDC](#): If it's still possible to vote early, consider it. The crowds are typically smaller than they are on Election Day.

If you're able to mail in your ballot, do – [just don't lick the envelope](#).

If you think you have a fever or respiratory symptoms, the CDC advises that you stay home. It's unfortunate to skip out on your civic duty, but sick people shouldn't visit crowded locations.

Work/Life

**Q: Should I go to work?**

**A:** If you can, you [should stay home from work](#) when you're sick, whether or not you have coronavirus.

Many companies are increasingly flexible with [work from home](#) policies. If your company is allowing employees to work from home, consider it. Some companies have enforced working from home.

If you must go into work, maintain 6 feet of distance from your colleagues, wash your hands frequently and practice good respiratory etiquette by coughing or sneezing into your elbow.

Avoid handshakes, switch in-person meetings to teleconferences and [disinfect your workspace](#) with [EPA-approved products](#) at the start of your shift.

Work/Life

**Q: Can I be fired if I stay home sick?**

**A:** An [employee can be fired](#) if they don't show up to work and they don't have sick leave that would cover the absence, says Krista Slosburg, an employment attorney at Stokes Lawrence in Seattle.

But there are exceptions.

Employers that make workers with coronavirus come in may be violating Occupational Safety and Health Administration [OSHA] regulations, according to Donna Ballman, who heads an employee advocacy law firm in Florida.

Work/Life

**Q: What happens when workers don't get paid sick leave?**

**A:** If you work in a city or state that requires sick leave and you use it, you [can't be terminated](#)

or disciplined.

But there is no federal mandate that requires companies to offer [paid sick leave](#), and almost a quarter of all US workers don't get it, [according to 2019 government data](#). Some state and local governments have passed laws that require companies to offer paid sick leave.

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) can sometimes protect a worker's job in the event they get sick, but it won't guarantee they get paid while they're out.

Employee advocates urge businesses to consider the special circumstances of the coronavirus, and some already have. Uber and Olive Garden are two that recently updated their sick leave policies to adjust to the pandemic.

Work/Life

**Q: Can managers send a sick worker home?**

**A:** [Yes, managers can.](#)

The Society for Human Resource Management recommends companies “actively encourage sick employees to stay home, send symptomatic employees home until they are able to return to work safely, and require employees returning from high-risk areas to telework during the incubation period [of 14 days].”

If a manager feels an employee's illness poses a direct threat to colleagues' safety, the manager may be able to insist the employee be evaluated by a doctor, said Alka Ramchandani-Raj, an attorney specializing in workplace safety at the law firm Littler Mendelson.

Work/Life

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“We've already helped drivers in some affected areas, and we're working to quickly implement this worldwide.”

Travel

**Q: If traveling on a plane, how do I stay safe?**

**A:** It's not the cabin air you need to worry about. It's keeping your hands clean.

Always be mindful of where your hands have been, travel medicine specialist Dr. Richard Dawood said.

Airport handrails, door handles and airplane lavatory levers are notoriously dirty.

"It is OK to touch these things as long as you then wash or sanitize your hands before contaminating your face, touching or handling food," Dawood said.

"Hand sanitizers are great. So are antiseptic hand wipes, which you can also use to wipe down armrests, remote controls at your seat and your tray table."

Travel

**Q: Since a plane's cabin keeps circulating air, will I get sick if another passenger is sick?**

**A:** Most viruses don't spread easily on airplanes because of how the air circulates and is filtered, [the CDC says](#).

Modern commercial jets recirculate 10-50% of the air in the cabin, mixed with outside air. "The recirculated air passes through a series of filters 20-30 times per hour," the CDC says.

"Furthermore, air generally circulates in defined areas within the aircraft, thus limiting the radius of distribution of pathogens spread by small-particle aerosols. As a result, the cabin air environment is not conducive to the spread of most infectious diseases."

Still, try to avoid contact with anyone sneezing or coughing. And if you're feeling sick, [cover your entire mouth and nose with the inside of your elbow](#) when you cough or sneeze.

Travel

**Q: Which countries have travel bans due to coronavirus?**

**A:** Many countries have put temporary restrictions on their entry policies to try to stop the spread of coronavirus.

These wide-ranging restrictions affect travelers from across the world, so check ahead before making plans. You can learn more about [current restrictions in this CNN article](#).

Travel

**Q: I have plans to go on a cruise. Should I rebook or cancel?**

**A:** "US citizens, particularly travelers with underlying health conditions, should not travel by cruise ship," the [US Department of State](#) says.

Cruise ship passengers are at an increased risk of infection, the [CDC](#) says. The virus spreads more easily between passengers in tight quarters.

Several cruise ships have been linked to coronavirus, including the Diamond Princess,

where [more than 700 people were infected](#). At least seven of those patients have died.

Since the coronavirus outbreak started, some cruise lines have implemented [more flexible rebooking or cancellation policies](#).

Travel

**Q: If I have a weakened immune system, should I cancel my travel plans?**

**A:** People who are immunocompromised “are at higher risk from this illness, as well as other illnesses like the flu. Avoiding contact with ill people is crucial,” Washington state’s [Snohomish Health District](#) said.

“While rates of infection may not differ significantly between healthy and immunocompromised travelers, the [latter are at greater risk for severe disease](#),” according to researchers from the Washington University School of Medicine.

Travel

**Q: Should I avoid public transportation?**

**A:** If you rely on public transportation, use caution. If you’re sick or live in an area where an outbreak has been reported, avoid it.

Mass transit could increase your risk of exposure to coronavirus. Many transit systems are upping their cleaning regimens — notably the New York subway system.

Dr. Robyn Gershon, a professor of epidemiology at New York University’s School of Public Health, [has some tips](#): When you ride a bus or subway, sneeze or cough into your elbow. Use a tissue to hold onto a pole. Avoid touching your face while you’re riding, and use hand sanitizer if you have it while you’re commuting.

Again, wash your hands before, during and after your trip.

[New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo recommends](#) letting crowded trains or buses pass and waiting for a less crowded one. It’s nearly impossible to maintain 6 feet of distance on a packed subway car.

If you have a chronic illness, find alternative means of transport — being in a crowded subway car or bus will significantly increase your risk of infection.

Travel

**Q: Why doesn’t the US have enough medical supplies to handle this outbreak?**

**A:** Top healthcare officials say [the US does not have enough stockpiled medical equipment](#) like masks, gowns and gloves to meet the anticipated need as this pandemic grows.

There are several reasons hospitals are on track to face dire shortages, said Dr. William Schaffner, an infectious disease expert and professor at Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

“About 20 or 30 years ago, we decided that we would not over-hospitalize,” Schaffner said.

Back then, hospitals often had empty hospital beds for new patients. But now, many

hospitals are “absolutely full,” Schaffner said. “We have under-built hospital beds because they are very expensive.”

Also, Americans have grown accustomed to “just-in-time” ordering. But that becomes a huge problem when international supply chains are disrupted by an outbreak. “We didn’t anticipate international turbulence influencing this,” Schaffner said.

Now, some health care workers are [making their own masks](#). They’ve also been told [they can use bandanas or scarves as masks](#).

Treatment & Prevention

**Q: Is there a cure?**

**A:** [There’s currently no cure](#) for the novel coronavirus. And while research is underway, it could be more than a year before a vaccine becomes publicly available.

Treatment & Prevention

**Q: Why is a cure taking so long?**

**A:** An antiviral drug must be able to target the specific part of a virus’s life cycle that is necessary for it to reproduce, according to [Harvard Medical School](#).

“In addition, an antiviral drug must be able to kill a virus without killing the human cell it occupies. And viruses are highly adaptive.”

Treatment & Prevention

**Q: What do I do if I think I’m sick?**

**A:** Stay home. Call your doctor to talk about your symptoms and let them know you’re coming for an appointment so they can prepare for your visit, [the CDC says](#).

Only a Covid-19 test can diagnose you with the virus, but if you suspect you have it, isolate yourself at home. Limit close contact with other people and animals you live with – the CDC recommends keeping 6 feet of distance.

Many patients with coronavirus are able to recover at home. If you’ve been diagnosed and your illness is worsening, seek medical attention promptly. You may need to be monitored in a hospital.

Ask your physician to call the local or state health department, too, so they’re aware that you’re being monitored for the virus.

Treatment & Prevention

**Q: What’s the best way to prevent coronavirus?**

**A:** Stay at least 6 feet away from others, and wash your hands often.

The best way to kill germs is by [scrubbing your hands with soap and water](#) for 20 seconds. Do this frequently before, during and after you visit a public place or have contact with

people.

When soap isn't available, use a hand sanitizer that's at least 60% alcohol. Rub the sanitizer around your hands until it's dry.

If you live or work near someone who may be sick, avoid close contact with them. And if there's an outbreak in your community, stay home as much as possible and limit your contact with people.

Treatment & Prevention

**Q: Should I spray myself or my kids with disinfectant?**

**A:** No. Those products work on surfaces but can be dangerous to your body.

There are some [chemical disinfectants](#), including bleach, 75% ethanol, peracetic acid and chloroform, that may kill the virus on surfaces.

But if the virus is already in your body, putting those substances on your skin or under your nose won't kill it, the [World Health Organization](#) says. Not to mention, those chemicals can harm you.

And please – do not ingest chemical disinfectants.

Treatment & Prevention

**Q: I've heard that home remedies can cure or prevent the virus. Is that true?**

**A:** There's [no evidence](#) from the outbreak that eating garlic, sipping water every 15 minutes or taking vitamin C will protect people from the new coronavirus. Same goes for using essential oils, colloidal silver and steroids.

Treatment & Prevention

**Q: If infected with coronavirus, can you survive it and recover?**

**A:** Absolutely. The vast majority of people with coronavirus survive.

The director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases has estimated the death rate is ["about 2%."](#)

Treatment & Prevention

**Q: How long does it take to recover?**

**A:** "It takes anything up to six weeks to recover from this disease," said [Dr. Michael Ryan](#) of the World Health Organization.

"People who suffer very severe illness can take months to recover from the illness."

Recovery is often marked by a patient no longer showing symptoms and having two consecutive negative tests at least one day apart, Ryan said. But there is [no known cure](#) for the novel coronavirus.

Treatment & Prevention

**Q: Why waste a test kit on a person without symptoms?**

**A:** Some people with coronavirus have mild or no symptoms. And in some cases, symptoms don't appear until [up to 14 days after infection](#).

During that incubation period, it's possible to get coronavirus from someone with no symptoms. It's also possible you may have coronavirus without feeling sick and are accidentally infecting others.

So anyone who has had close contact with someone known to have coronavirus should ask a health care provider about getting tested, the [US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) said.

Anyone who recently traveled to [a part of the world where coronavirus is widespread](#) should do the same.

Treatment & Prevention

**Q: Why is the US so far behind other countries with testing?**

**A:** Experts say it's due to cuts in federal funding for public health and problems with early testing.

**Problems with public health infrastructure** Two years ago, the [CDC stopped funding epidemic prevention activities](#) in 39 countries, including China. This happened because the Trump administration refused to allocate money to a program that started during the 2014 Ebola outbreak.

Former CDC director Dr. Tom Frieden warned that move "would [significantly increase the chance an epidemic will spread](#) without our knowledge and endanger lives in our country and around the world."

**Problems with the testing** Malfunctions, shortages and delays in availability have all contributed to the slowdown.

In the first few weeks of the outbreak in the US, the CDC was the only facility in the country that could confirm test results — even though a World Health Organization test became available around the same time.

Some test kits that were sent around the country were flawed — a move that put the US behind about "four to five weeks," says Dr. Rob Davidson, executive director of the Committee to Protect Medicare.

Treatment & Prevention

**Q: If a coronavirus patient progresses to pneumonia, what antibiotics if any have proven to be effective?**

**A:** No, antibiotics are not effective against coronavirus because the disease is a viral infection, not a bacterial infection.

"However, if you are hospitalized for the [coronavirus], you may receive antibiotics because bacterial co-infection is possible," the [World Health Organization](#) says.

There is [no known cure](#) for the coronavirus. Researchers are studying [whether the antiviral drug remdesivir](#) might work, but [testing of that drug just started](#).

For now, coronavirus patients get “supportive” treatment, “which means giving fluids, medicine to reduce fever, and, in severe cases, supplemental oxygen,” the [Harvard Medical School](#) says.

Treatment & Prevention

**Q: Will a pneumonia or flu vaccine protect me from coronavirus?**

**A:** Some cases of coronavirus do lead to pneumonia. But the pneumonia vaccine won't help.

“Vaccines against pneumonia, such as pneumococcal vaccine and Haemophilus influenza type B (Hib) vaccine, only help protect people from these specific bacterial infections,” according to [Harvard Medical School](#).

“They do not protect against any coronavirus pneumonia.”

For now, health officials are urging the public to get the flu vaccine. The flu shot does not protect against coronavirus, but it does help protect against a [massive and unnecessary burden on hospitals as they struggle to tackle coronavirus](#).

The CDC estimates about [140,000 to 810,000 people are hospitalized with the flu](#) every year in the US. And about half of Americans don't get vaccinated – [including most children who die from the flu](#).

Treatment & Prevention

**Q: After recovering from coronavirus, does the recovered patient have immunity to the virus?**

**A:** It's too early to know for sure. But other coronaviruses, like ones that cause the common cold, might give us clues.

With “common cold coronaviruses, you don't actually have immunity that lasts for very long, and so we don't know the answer with this specific coronavirus,” said Dr. Celine Gounder, a professor of medicine and infectious diseases at the New York University School of Medicine.

“That's actually going to be one of the challenges with designing a vaccine is how do you actually cause the immunity to last long enough to protect you.”

Treatment & Prevention

**Q: Did Dean Koontz predict this outbreak in the book “The Eyes of Darkness” almost 40 years ago?**

**A:** No. There are some interesting coincidences in the 1981 fiction novel, which says “a severe pneumonia-like illness will spread around the globe” around the year 2020. Modern editions of the book call the biological strain “Wuhan-400,” and the current coronavirus outbreak started in Wuhan, China.

But there are [important differences between the book and reality](#). The original version of

the book called the strain the “[Gorki-400](#),” in reference to a Russian locality, before it was later changed to the “Wuhan-400.” In the book, the virus was man-made, while scientists believe the [novel coronavirus started in animals and jumped to humans](#). And in the book, the virus had a 100% mortality rate. Early estimates of the mortality rate for this coronavirus outbreak range from 2-4%.

Myths & Misinformation

**Q: Can heat kill the coronavirus?**

**A:** Hand dryers can’t kill the virus, [according to WHO](#). The organization also says that UV lamps shouldn’t be used to sterilize hands or other areas of the body because the radiation can irritate skin.

Drinking hot water or taking hot baths won’t kill it, either.

President Donald Trump [has previously suggested](#) that heat might kill the virus, and as a result, the current outbreak could dissipate by summer.

But public health experts say [there’s no way to know this](#).

Myths & Misinformation

**Q: Can coronavirus go through skin and into the body?**

**A:** “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,” [the CDC says](#).

More often than not, people get coronavirus through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

“These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs,” the CDC says.

Myths & Misinformation

**Q: I’ve heard that black people can’t get coronavirus.**

**A:** Anyone can get coronavirus.

Any person who comes into close contact with someone who is infected is at risk for contracting the virus, according to the CDC.

“Black people can get coronavirus, just like other people,” said Dr. Jennifer Caudle, an African-American family physician who has also been [debunking coronavirus myths](#).

Caudle said she worries that some people may not take proper precautions to protect themselves against the virus because they may have heard this myth.

In Africa, the pandemic is gaining a foothold. So far, the virus hasn’t spread in Africa as quickly as it has on some other continents. But numbers there [are rising fast](#).

Myths & Misinformation

**Q: The flu infects a lot more people and kills a lot more Americans than coronavirus. So why should we worry about coronavirus?**

**A:** It's true, about [20,000 Americans have died from the flu since October](#), according to CDC estimates. Nationwide, the flu has infected about 34 million.

But the mortality rate from coronavirus is higher than that of the flu, and it's especially bad for the elderly and those with chronic underlying chronic conditions.

There's a "very high mortality rate – one in six – among people who are over 80 and people with underlying chronic disease," epidemiologist Dr. Abdul El-Sayed said.

And while a flu shot is available, about half of Americans don't get vaccinated – [including most children who die from the flu](#).

By contrast, there no vaccine available to protect against coronavirus.

Myths & Misinformation

Work/Life

**Q: Can I get coronavirus from my pet, or vice versa?**

**A:** "No. There is no evidence that companion animals or pets such as cats and dogs have been infected or could spread the virus that causes Covid-19," the [World Health Organization](#) says.

Myths & Misinformation

**Q: I've heard that home remedies can cure or prevent the virus.**

**A:** There's [no evidence](#) from the outbreak that eating garlic, sipping water every 15 minutes or taking vitamin C will protect people from the new coronavirus. Same goes for using essential oils, colloidal silver and steroids.

Some posts have suggested that putting sesame oil on your body or spraying yourself with alcohol or chlorine will kill the virus. That's also false.

Myths & Misinformation

**Q: Can I get coronavirus from a package sent from China?**

**A:** No. "The new coronavirus cannot be transmitted through goods manufactured in China or any country reporting Covid-19 cases," the [World Health Organization](#) says.

"Even though the new coronavirus can stay on surfaces for a few hours or up to several days (depending on the type of surface), it is very unlikely that the virus will persist on a surface after being moved, travelled, and exposed to different conditions and temperatures," WHO said.

Again, the best ways to prevent transmission is to stay 6 feet away from others, thoroughly wash your hands, and disinfect surfaces with [EPA-approved products](#).

Myths & Misinformation

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