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## 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

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# 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Human Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that usually cause illnesses like the common cold. Almost everyone gets one of these viruses at some point in their lives. Most of the time the illness only lasts for a short time.

## COVID-19: a new coronavirus

It was discovered in December 2019 and has now spread throughout the world. As the virus spreads, we are seeing some people with mild illness, some who get very sick, and some who have died. The reason health officials are concerned is because the virus is new, which makes it hard to predict how it will continue to affect people. Researchers and doctors are learning more about it every day, including exactly how it spreads and who is most at risk.

## Symptoms of COVID-19

Symptoms of COVID-19 can range from mild to severe and can include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

## Who is at risk?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), children do not seem to be at higher risk for getting COVID-19.

However, some people are, including

- Older adults
- People who have serious chronic medical conditions like:
  - Heart disease
  - Diabetes
  - Lung disease
  - Suppressed immune systems

## How to protect your family

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19, but there are a few things you can do to keep your family healthy:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer. Look for one that is 60% or higher alcohol-based.
- Reduce close contact with others by practicing "social distancing." This means staying home as much as possible and avoiding public places where close contact with others is likely.
- Keep your kids away from others who are sick or keep them home if they are ill.
- Teach kids to cough and sneeze into a tissue (make sure to throw it away after each use!) or to cough and sneeze into their arm or elbow, not their hands.
- Clean and disinfect your home as usual using regular household cleaning sprays or wipes.
- Wash stuffed animals or other plush toys, following manufacturer's instructions in the warmest water possible and dry them completely.
- Avoid touching your face; teach your children to do the same.

- Avoid travel to highly infected areas.
- Follow local and state guidance on travel restrictions.

**If your child has been exposed to COVID-19, or you are concerned about your child's symptoms, call your pediatrician immediately.**

## How to care for someone in your family with COVID-19

People who are mildly ill with COVID-19 are usually able to isolate at home during their illness. However, it may be recommended to take these additional steps:

- **Separate family members with COVID-19 from others as much as possible.** The person with the virus should stay in a specific room and away from other people in your home. Ideally, they should use a separate bathroom, if available. Limit visitors in the house.
- **Avoid contact with pets.** This includes petting, snuggling, being kissed or licked, and sharing food.
- **Call ahead before visiting the doctor.** This will help them take steps to keep other people from getting infected or exposed.
- **Wear a facemask.** The CDC only recommends facemasks for people who have symptoms of COVID-19, not for people who are healthy. Healthcare workers and anyone taking care of someone with COVID-19 should wear facemasks.
- **Avoid sharing personal household items.** Don't share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people or pets in the home. After using these items, they should be washed thoroughly with soap and water.
- **Extra cleaning for all "high-touch" surfaces.** These include counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables. Also, clean any surfaces that may have blood, stool, or body fluids on them. Use a household cleaning spray or wipes and follow the instructions on the label.
- **Monitor symptoms.** Call your doctor right away if the illness gets worse.

## Dealing with school and child care closings

In many communities, officials have decided to temporarily close schools and child care centers to help slow the spread of the virus. If your children need to stay at home due to the outbreak, try to keep their days as routine and scheduled as possible. Here are a few tips that can help:

- **Read books with your child.** It's not only fun, but reading together strengthens your bond with your child AND helps their development.
- **Make time for active play.** Bring out the blocks, balls, jump ropes and buckets and let the creativity go. Play games that kids of all ages can play, like tag or duck duck goose. Let your kids make up new games. Encourage older kids to make up a workout or dance to keep them moving.

- **Keep an eye on media time.** Whenever possible, play video games or go online with your child to keep that time structured and limited. If kids are missing their school friends or other family, try video chats to stay in touch.

## Talking to children about COVID-19

There's a lot of news coverage about the outbreak of COVID-19 and it can be overwhelming for parents and frightening to kids. **The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) encourages parents and others who work closely with children to filter information and talk about it in a way that their child can understand.**

These tips can help:

- **Simple reassurance.** Remind children that researchers and doctors are learning as much as they can, as quickly as they can, about the virus and are taking steps to keep everyone safe.
- **Give them control.** It's also a great time to remind your children of what they can do to help—washing their hands often, coughing into a tissue or their sleeves, and getting enough sleep.
- **Watch for signs of anxiety.** Children may not have the words to express their worry, but you may see signs of it. They may get cranky, be more clingy, have trouble sleeping, or seem distracted. Keep the reassurance going and try to stick to your normal routines.

- **Monitor their media.** Keep young children away from frightening images they may see on TV, social media, computers, etc. For older children, talk together about what they are hearing on the news and correct any misinformation or rumors you may hear.

- **Be a good role model.** COVID-19 doesn't discriminate and neither should we. While COVID-19 started in Wuhan, China, it doesn't mean that having Asian ancestry—or any other ancestry—makes someone more susceptible to the virus or more contagious. Stigma and discrimination hurt everyone by creating fear or anger towards others. When you show empathy and support to those who are ill, your children will too.

## Stay informed

Families are encouraged to stay up to date about this situation as we learn more about how to prevent this virus from spreading in homes and in communities.

For more parenting information from the AAP, visit [www.HealthyChildren.org](http://www.HealthyChildren.org).

For the latest developments from the CDC, including travel warnings, new cases, and prevention advice, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

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