

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) FAQ's

Last updated March 6, 2020

For the general public:

What is the coronavirus disease 2019?

Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that typically cause respiratory illnesses, which frequently include the common cold to more severe conditions such as pneumonia. The word 'novel' means new, meaning this is a new strain of this particular virus. This new virus has been named "coronavirus disease 2019", or COVID-19 for short, by the World Health Organization (WHO). An outbreak of pneumonia in Wuhan City, China, was reported to WHO on December 31, 2019. As of March 6, 2020, there have been over 100,000 confirmed cases and over 3,400 deaths with COVID-19 as the cause of the outbreak. These numbers are changing daily.

Where did this virus come from?

The first case was identified in Wuhan, China. Coronaviruses are common in different species of animals and rarely can infect people, and then continue to spread from person-to-person. The origin of this virus is thought to have come from bats but research is ongoing. Due to this, China has reportedly banned the trade and consumption of wild animals.

Can I get COVID-19 from a pet or animal?

Although this virus seems to have originated from an animal source, there is no reason to think that animals or pets in the U.S. might be a source of infection. COVID-19 is being spread person-to-person. There have been no reports of animals becoming sick with COVID-19. As always, it is still a good idea to wash your hands after touching any animal.

If I have COVID-19, can I transmit it to my pet?

To be cautious, you should restrict contact with pets and other animals while you are sick with COVID-19. Although there have not been reports of pets or animals becoming sick with COVID-19, there is still research being done on this new virus. If possible, have a friend or family member take care of your pet while you are sick. If that is not possible, be sure to wash your hands before and after touching your pet and wear a facemask.

How is COVID-19 spread?

It is thought that this virus is spread through respiratory droplets, similar to how the flu and other respiratory illnesses are spread. This typically happens when an infected person coughs or sneezes and you are in close proximity to that person (about 6 feet). As with most respiratory viruses, people are thought to be most contagious when they are the sickest. It may be possible to get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching your own mouth, nose, or eyes. This is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

Can I get COVID-19 from packages or products that are shipped from China or other areas with high transmission?

At this time, there is no evidence to support that transmission of COVID-19 is associated with imported goods. There have been no cases of COVID-19 in the U.S. linked with imported goods. Coronaviruses are usually not able to survive well on surfaces and are generally thought to spread mostly through respiratory droplets.

Can I get COVID-19 from animals or animal products imported from China or other areas with high transmission?

At this time, there is no evidence to support that animals or animal products imported from China or other areas pose a risk for spreading COVID-19. There are multiple agencies that closely regulate the safety of animals and animal products that are imported into the U.S. With this being a new virus, the situation is rapidly changing and information will be updated if there are changes.

What is being done to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

Foreign nationals who have visited China or Iran in the past 14 days cannot enter the U.S. American citizens, lawful permanent residents and their families who have been in China in the past 14 days will be directed to one of 11 airports for a health screening. Passengers traveling from China to the U.S. are required to be monitored for 14 days, which entails staying home, monitoring temperatures twice a day and reporting any symptoms to the local health department. It is also requested that travelers from other countries with widespread community transmission and others who have potentially been exposed to COVID-19 to follow the same guidelines. If they are traveling specifically from the Hubei Province in China, they will be placed under a mandatory quarantine for 14 days.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms can include fever, cough, and difficulty breathing. At this time, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) believe that symptoms may appear in just 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure.

I have those symptoms. Does that mean I may have COVID-19?

The best thing to do is to call ahead to a healthcare professional to discuss any concerns. Keep in mind that there are many other respiratory illnesses circulating during this time of year and the risk of COVID-19 transmission in Indiana is still low.

Can I still travel? Is it safe to go to the airport?

It is recommended for all travelers to avoid non-essential travel to mainland China (not including Hong Kong, Macau, or Taiwan), South Korea, Italy and Iran per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Older adults and those with chronic conditions should consider postponing travel to Japan. It is also recommended to reconsider cruises within Asia. There are no restrictions to other travel destinations (in regards to COVID-19), and it is safe to go to the airport. Please consider that changes to travel recommendations are being made daily so please check [COVID-19 Travel Information](#) for the most current information.

What should I do if I think I may have COVID-19?

Out of an abundance of caution, please notify the Marion County Public Health Department's Infectious Disease Program at (317) 221-2117, 8 am -5 pm. If after hours, please call (317) 221-2000. As in any situation, if you are experiencing difficulty breathing you should call 911 or visit an emergency room immediately. Please make any medical personnel be aware of any travel history and/or exposure to COVID-19.

How do I prevent getting COVID-19, as well as other respiratory viruses?

The importance of thoroughly washing your hands with soap and water (for at least 20 seconds) cannot be stressed enough. If you are unable to wash your hands, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Avoid close contact with people who are sick. If you yourself are sick, stay home to prevent the spread of illness. If you have a cough, use a tissue or your arm to cover the cough. Be sure to throw the tissue away and wash your hands!

Is there a vaccine for COVID-19?

No, there is currently not a vaccine available.

How is COVID-19 treated?

There is no specific treatment for COVID-19. Supportive measures to relieve symptoms is recommended, which would include drinking plenty of fluids, getting plenty of rest, and taking over-the-counter medications to relieve pain and fevers.

Where should I go to receive more information about COVID-19?

Information and guidance about COVID-19 is rapidly evolving. To find the most up-to-date information, please refer to the CDC website: [CDC COVID-19 Information](#)

What do I do if I live in the same household or am taking care of somebody that has been diagnosed with COVID-19?

The Indiana State Department of Health has put together specific instructions for how to handle those situations. You can find them here: [Home Care Instructions](#)

Are there special recommendations for cleaning my home environment?

Practice routine cleaning off of frequently touched surfaces (tables, doorknobs, keyboards, cell phones, light switches, handles, faucets, toilets, etc.) with household cleaners and EPA-registered disinfectants that are appropriate for the surface. Follow label instructions. Here is a list of EPA-registered products that would be appropriate to use: [COVID-19 Approved Products](#)

For more specific guidance on cleaning and disinfecting home environments, please refer to this information put out by the CDC: [CDC Household Cleaning Recommendations](#)