



Pacific  
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## COVID-19: Frequently Asked Questions

### What is Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a zoonotic (passed from animal to man) virus identified as the cause of an outbreak of respiratory illness first detected in Wuhan, China. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses generally causing illness in animals. Including the COVID-19 there are now seven known coronaviruses that infect people and usually only cause mild respiratory disease, such as the common cold. However, at least two previously identified coronaviruses have caused severe disease — severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) coronavirus that had originated from bats and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) coronavirus originating from camels.

### How to recognize the symptoms?

Common signs of COVID-19 infection include respiratory symptoms, fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death.

### How does COVID-19 spread?

People can catch COVID-19 from others who have the virus. The disease can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth which are spread when a person with COVID-19 coughs, sneezes or exhales. These droplets land on objects and surfaces around the person. Other people then catch COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. People can also catch COVID-19 if they breathe in droplets from a person with COVID-19 who coughs out or exhales droplets. Therefore, it is important to stay more than 1 meter (3 feet) away from a person who is sick.

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## What can I do to protect myself and prevent the spread of disease?

You can reduce your chances of being infected or spreading COVID-19 by taking some simple precautions:

- Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water.
- Maintain at least 1 meter (3 feet) distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth.
- Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately.
- Stay home if you feel unwell. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and call in advance. Follow the directions of your local health authority.
- Keep up to date on the latest COVID-19 hotspots (cities or local areas where COVID-19 is spreading widely). If possible, avoid traveling to places – especially if you are an older person or have diabetes, heart or lung disease.

## How likely am I to catch COVID-19?

The risk depends on where you are - and more specifically, whether there is a COVID-19 outbreak unfolding there.

## Should I worry about COVID-19?

Illness due to COVID-19 infection is generally mild, especially for children and young adults. However, it can cause serious illness: about 1 in every 5 people who catch it need hospital care. It is therefore quite normal for people to worry about how the COVID-19 outbreak will affect them and their loved ones.

We can channel our concerns into actions to protect ourselves, our loved ones and our communities. First and foremost, among these actions is regular and thorough hand-washing and good respiratory hygiene. Secondly, keep informed and follow the advice of the local health authorities including any restrictions put in place on travel, movement and gatherings.

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## What does it mean to self-quarantine?

If you are asked to self-quarantine after returning from a country as listed in SPC's COVID-19 Staff Communication advisories, you should stay home — in your room, your apartment, your villa or your house. Do not go to work, attend athletic events, or other social gatherings until 14 days after the date of your departure from the country in question. Follow these guidelines for self-quarantine:

- Report any symptoms of COVID-19 immediately to your nominated health marshal.
- Stay in your room, your apartment, your villa or your house. Do not go to work, classes, athletic events, or other social or religious gatherings until 14 days after your departure from the country in question.
- Limit contact with other people as much as possible. This includes isolating yourself as much as possible from anyone living in your residence.
- Cover your mouth and nose with your upper arm, bent elbow or a tissue. Never cough in the direction of someone else.
- Wash your hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand rubs after coughing or sneezing or throwing a used tissue in the garbage bin.
- Avoid sharing household items. Do not share drinking glasses, towels, eating utensils, bedding, or any other items until you are no longer asked to self-quarantine.

Keep your surroundings clean. It is up to staff to keep their own living and work spaces clean. While the virus is not spread very well from contact with soiled household surfaces, try to clean surfaces that you share with others, such as door knobs, telephones, and bathroom surfaces (or any other object that you sneeze or cough on), with a standard household disinfectant. Wash your hands after cleaning the area.

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## I live with someone who is asked to self-quarantine. What precautions should I take?

If you live with a spouse or family members who has been asked to self-quarantine, you should follow these guidelines:

- Clean your hands. All persons sharing living quarters with someone who is under self-quarantine should clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub frequently.
- Monitor yourself for symptoms. If you are sharing living quarters with someone who is under self-quarantine, monitor yourself closely for the development of fever and respiratory symptoms. If you develop a fever, cough, or sore throat, call your nominated health marshal to report your illness and get advice.
- Clean common surfaces. The virus is not spread very well from contact with soiled household surfaces, but it's still a good idea to clean surfaces that you share with the person who is under self-quarantine (or any sick person) such as door knobs, telephones, and bathroom surfaces. Use a standard household disinfectant. Wash your hands after cleaning the area.
- Wash laundry and dishes safely. If you are washing used linens (such as bed sheets and towels) for the person who is under self-quarantine, use household laundry soap and tumble dry on a hot setting. Avoid "hugging" laundry and use a laundry basket or bag while carrying it to the washing machine to prevent self-contamination. Clean your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub right after handling dirty laundry. Dirty dishes and eating utensils should be washed in a dishwasher or by hand with warm water and soap.

## I am sharing a bathroom with someone who is under self-quarantine. What should I do to avoid getting sick?

As always, you should ensure to wash your hands after touching anything in the bathroom. You should also avoid sharing any linens, such as bath towels or hand towels. The person who is under self-quarantine should be wearing a mask when they travel to and from the bathroom, and that should help limit exposure as well.

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