# Get the Facts: Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

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

Coronavirus Disease 2019, or COVID-19, is a respiratory disease caused by a novel (new) coronavirus that was first detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China and which continues to expand. Chinese health officials have reported tens of thousands of cases of COVID-19, with the virus reportedly spreading from person-to-person in parts of China. COVID-19 illnesses, most of them associated with travel from Wuhan, also are being reported in a growing number of international locations, including the United States. Person-to-person spread of COVID-19 also has been seen among close contacts of returned travelers from Wuhan.

## What is the health risk from COVID-19 in Chicago?

At this time, this virus is **NOT** spreading in communities in Chicago and in the U.S., and the vast majority of Americans have a low risk of exposure. The goal of the ongoing U.S. public health response is to detect new cases quickly and prevent community spread of COVID-19. The coming days and weeks are likely to bring more confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the U.S. and globally, but strong public health measures now may blunt the impact of the virus. CDPH is monitoring the situation carefully and will rapidly communicate any changes in this guidance. The latest situation summary updates, including the number of cases identified in the U.S., are available on CDC's web page Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

## What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Symptoms can include fever, cough, and difficulty breathing. For confirmed COVID-19 cases, reported illnesses have ranged from mild symptoms to severe illness and death. CDC believes at this time that symptoms of COVID-19 may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure.

## How does the virus spread?

Although the virus that causes COVID-19 probably emerged from an animal source, it can also spread from person-to-person. Spread from one person to another is thought to occur mainly via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Some viruses are highly contagious (like measles), while other viruses are less so. Typically, with most respiratory viruses, people are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic.

## What is the treatment for COVID-19?

There is no specific medicine to treat COVID-19 at this time, though studies are underway. People with COVID-19 should receive supportive care from a health care professional. Supportive care means care to help relieve symptoms; for example, medicine to bring down fevers, or oxygen if a patient's oxygen level is low.

## Is there a vaccine?

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19.

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### How can I protect myself from COVID-19 and other respiratory diseases?

**As with any respiratory virus, you can protect yourself and others by taking everyday common sense actions:**

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

While the immediate risk of COVID-19 to the American public is believed to be low at this time, it's currently flu and respiratory disease season and CDPH recommends getting a flu vaccine, taking everyday preventive actions to help stop the spread of germs, and taking flu antivirals if prescribed. For more information, see www.chicago.gov/flu.

### What are CDPH's recommendations for using a facemask?

CDPH **does not recommend** that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19. Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is also crucial for health workers and people who are taking care of someone in close settings (at home or in a health care facility).

### What can travelers do to protect themselves and others?

CDPH recommends **avoiding travel to China.** For travel advice for other countries, please visit that country's Destination Page or CDC's Travel Health Notice website.

### What if I recently traveled to China?

If you have been in China or have been exposed to someone sick with COVID-19 in the last 14 days, you will face some limitations on your movement and activity. Please follow instructions during this time. Your cooperation is integral to the ongoing public health response to try to slow spread of this virus.

- Your health will be screened for COVID-19 symptoms. Travelers who have fever, cough, or trouble breathing will be taken to a medical facility for further evaluation and care.
- Travelers who have been in Hubei Province in the past 14 days and do not have symptoms will be placed under a quarantine order.
- Travelers from other parts of China (outside Hubei Province) who do not have symptoms should stay home and monitor their health. If you develop COVID-19 symptoms, call CDPH. If you can't reach CDPH, call ahead before going to a doctor's office or emergency room. Tell them your symptoms and that you were in China.

For more information, please visit www.chicago.gov/coronavirus or www.cdc.gov/coronavirus, email coronavirus@chicago.gov, or call **312-746-4835**.

*This version was released on 02/19/2020. It may be updated with new guidance.*
*Please visit www.chicago.gov/coronavirus to find the latest version.*

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