COVID-19

Frequently Asked Questions

How does COVID-19 spread?

It spreads through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. This happens most directly when someone is in close contact with an infected person (within 2 meters). It may also occur by touching infected surfaces. Some people may spread the virus before symptoms begin, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus is spread. People with symptoms typically have a higher amount of virus in their body and would therefore spread it more easily.

Is this a global pandemic?

Yes. On March 11, the WHO declared the current COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic, given the virus has spread to two or more continents with sustained, person-to-person transmission. The shift from an epidemic to a pandemic is likely to expand the response focus from individual containment measures (quarantine and isolation of the sick) to also include widescale community mitigation (minimizing the impact through public health measures). Mitigation methods may include more extensive limitations of mass gatherings and public events, school closures and strengthening public health systems and hospitals. Employers may implement new business continuity measures, and remote work options are likely to be encouraged where possible.

What does a global pandemic mean for myself, my family, and my work?

The WHO's recent announcement does not change the existing health and safety guidance that has been issued at this time. However, we remind staff to consider the following:

• Working from home and/or having children home from school;
• Have essential supplies in the home (planning for two weeks is a useful guide), including adequate supplies of prescription and over-the-counter medications;
• Continue to get your information from credible and trustworthy sources, such as WHO, CDC, your local health department, and the WBG Coronavirus (COVID-19) Hub. Beware of the "infodemic" which so often swirls through social media and news outlets during such times;
• If you are concerned about a serious chronic health condition and your potential risk, contact your health provider;
• Stay calm, focus on the many simple things you can do to reduce the risk of infection for yourself and your family, and follow the guidance of your local public health authority.

While it is always difficult to confront something new and uncertain, there are actions we can take to help stop the spread of germs, such as practicing good hygiene measures and following guidance on how to reduce the risk of spreading illness to others. Remember, you
don’t need to buy or have special equipment. Diligent practice of good personal hygiene, and social distancing (maintaining at least 2 meters (6 feet) distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing) to the extent possible, will remain the most effective ways to reduce the risk of infection.

What are the symptoms?

- Cough
- Fever (38.0 C or 100.4 F or higher)
- Difficulty breathing
- Fatigue

Other symptoms such as sore throat, and gastrointestinal symptoms may also be present. These symptoms may be mild to severe. Symptoms can appear from 1 day after exposure up to 14 days after exposure.

How do I prevent becoming infected?

- Avoid contact with people who are ill with fever or cough.
- Wash your hands with soap and water frequently and properly (for at least 20 seconds), particularly before eating, before touching your mouth or eyes, and after using the toilet. If soap and water are not immediately available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Become "touch aware." Be mindful of surfaces you are touching (door handles, elevator buttons, hand rails) and wash hands appropriately afterwards. Try not to touch your face.
- When coughing and sneezing cover your mouth and nose with a flexed elbow or tissue – throw tissue away immediately and wash your hands with soap. Encourage others to do the same.
- Avoid crowded areas or large gatherings to the extent possible. Do not go out if you are sick.

What should I do if I am sick?

- Stay home and away from others. Do not come to work. Do not travel. Your actions make a difference in limiting the spread of illness.
- Use good hygiene to prevent spreading your illness to others. Cover your mouth with a tissue or with your flexed elbow when coughing and sneezing. Wash your hands afterwards.

In addition, if you have a fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, and live in / have traveled in an affected location in the last 14 days:
• Seek medical care. Before you go to a doctor's office or emergency room, call ahead and tell them about your symptoms and recent travel.

• If you must go out, wear a surgical mask if you have one.

New Mar 15 - I live in the Washington, DC, area and don't have a personal doctor (or healthcare provider). I feel I may have symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, difficulty breathing) and want to get tested. Where should I go?

Below are several healthcare providers individuals can consider contacting if they don’t currently have a provider local to the DC, Virginia, and Maryland area:

• MedStar urgent care /prompt care (DC and Maryland) – see MedStar locations (select specifically for MedStar prompt care/urgent care)
• GW Medical Faculty Associates (DC) – Immediate and Primary Care
• Virginia Hospital Center in Arlington
• INOVA Hospitals located throughout Fairfax County: Fairfax, Alexandria, and Fair Oaks as well as INOVA urgent care centers

Please call any healthcare provider first to confirm their procedures to follow in advance of your arrival.

Note: any COVID-19 testing is based on the clinical assessment of the healthcare provider and is not currently recommended in the absence of symptoms, per the guidance and recommendations of public health authorities. Your healthcare provider may be aware of private labs conducting testing.

Remember, in an emergency, first dial 911.

Updated Mar 15 - Will staff and families be able to be tested for coronavirus?

Testing for coronavirus infection is done by certified and accredited laboratories using sophisticated biotechnology processes. In most countries (including the U.S.), the required test kits are under the control and guidance of national/state public health authorities. In the U.S., testing must be requested by a registered healthcare practitioner, according to specific risk-based criteria determined by the CDC. Currently tests are only done on symptomatic persons with risk factors suggesting that they may have been exposed to COVID-19. Testing cannot be requested by persons who are not sick, or who are wanting reassurance that they do not have COVID-19. Frequency and broader indications for testing are likely to change as test kits become more widely available.

When should I wear a face mask?

You should wear a face mask only if you are sick with a cough or fever and need to seek medical care, or anytime you are interacting with other people.
If local health authorities require people to wear masks in public places or if you are required to wear one in your office or residential building, then follow those local requirements.

Neither the WHO nor U.S. CDC recommends wearing a mask for protection in a community setting.

Those who are required to or choose to use masks should prioritize other preventive measures such as washing hands often with soap and water and staying away from other people when they are sick. Incorrect use of masks can increase the risk of infection. Further information on the use of masks can be found below:

- WHO: Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) advice for the public: When and how to use masks

**Note:** There is no strong evidence that face masks prevent infection when used by healthy people in public settings. The reasons for this may be that masks are often not used properly (fitted tightly around the nose and mouth); they do not protect against transmission of illness that may come from droplets entering the eyes; and people often unknowingly touch their faces and the outside of the mask, thereby transferring viral particles to their hands.

Is air travel or public transportation safe?

There is very little risk of any communicable disease being transmitted on board an aircraft. Most modern aircraft have air circulation and filtration systems that filter out bacteria, viruses, and other particles and exchange the air a certain number of times per hour (typically 20 – 30 times). Therefore, there is very low risk that any viral particles would be spread throughout an aircraft if there is a sick passenger. When there is a sick passenger, only those within approximately a 1 to 2-meter seating distance may be at risk, and this would only be in the instance of a subsequently lab-confirmed COVID-19 case.

Additionally, China and other countries are screening people at transportation hubs and many countries are screening passengers for illness or risk upon arrival, further lowering the risk of encountering an ill fellow passenger or risk of infection carried over from a previous flight.

Updated Mar 13 - Is it safe to travel to other locations with COVID-19 cases?

WBG Senior Management has suspended mission travel until further notice.

Prudent risk evaluation and decisions on criticality of personal travel are recommended for travel to destinations reporting community transmission of COVID-19. A constantly updated list of such destinations can be found on the CDC Travel Health Advisory page for countries with coronavirus cases.

What should I do if I have had contact with a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case?

If you have been in close contact with someone who is suspected to have COVID-19 you should stay at home and avoid contact with others for a period of 14 days from the last known contact with the ill person. If living with someone who is sick with COVID-19 (and who is not hospitalized), you should not come to work for a period of 14 days after the sick individual is
declared free of infection, and you should follow instructions for minimizing your exposure outlined by the U.S. CDC. If living with someone sick with COVID-19, local public health authorities should give you guidance on when you will be able to end your self-isolation.

If I have traveled to a country with coronavirus transmission, should I stay at home (self-isolate) upon my return and avoid contact with others?

All staff who have traveled from countries reporting widespread sustained (ongoing) transmission should not return to the workplace until 14 days after their exit from those countries, and are required to stay at home and avoid contact with others (practice social distancing). They should monitor their health during this period. This advice applies to travelers to all destinations.

Monitoring of health should include a daily temperature check for fever (defined as 38.0 C / 100.4 F) and monitoring for symptoms including cough, difficulty breathing, or fatigue.

Do I need to stay at home if a member of my household has recently returned from an affected country?

Staff who have household members recently returned from countries with widespread transmission do not need to stay at home and avoid contact with others if they are not ill. However, if out of an abundance of caution, such staff prefer to work from home, they should feel comfortable requesting this with their managers.

Their household members should follow national guidance for staying at home and avoiding contact with others, and if their household member becomes ill, then the staff member should do the same. Ending of a stay at home period should be upon medical advice.

What do I do if I have to stay at home and avoid contact with others?

Those who are self-isolating and monitoring their health should follow local health authority guidelines.

If there are no guidelines, general recommendations include:

1. Monitor your temperature for fever (38 C / 100.4 F or greater) at least twice daily and be aware of other symptoms of illness such as cough or shortness of breath for 14 days after return.
2. Other early symptoms to watch for include chills, body aches, sore throat, headache and runny nose, muscle pain or diarrhea.
3. If any these symptoms develop, follow the guidance for "what should I do if I am sick" in the FAQ above.
4. Practice social distancing:
   - Restrict activities outside your home, except for getting medical care.
   - Do not go to work, school, or public areas, and do not use public transportation or taxis.
• Avoid sharing household items - You should not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, bedding, or other items with other people in your home. After using these items, you should wash them thoroughly with soap and water.

• Only people who normally live in the household should be at home. Do not allow visitors.

5. Practice respiratory hygiene:
   • Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue – dispose of your tissues in a lined closed trash can and immediately wash your hands for at least 20 seconds. In addition to regular washing, if your hands are visibly soiled wash for 40-60 seconds.
   • Wash your hands frequently (and before eating) with soap and water for 20 seconds. If no soap is available use an alcohol-based hand rub.
   • Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

6. Reducing boredom during self-isolation
   • Keep up a normal daily routine as far as possible.
   • Keep in touch with family and friends via telephone, email and social media.
   • Continue with Home Based Work.
   • Ask your child’s school to supply assignments, worksheets and homework.
   • Exercise regularly - options could include dancing, floor exercises, yoga, using home exercise equipment.
   • Board games, crafts, drawing and reading may be good options as well.

What practical steps can I take to address my anxiety about this situation?

It is natural to worry about things that might happen in the future. A practical step you can take is to consider your current health needs and how you can best protect your health and that of your family. Ensure that you have an adequate supply of any prescription medications you or your family members need, know where to go to seek medical care, practice good hygiene such as washing hands frequently, use good cough etiquette, and avoid touching your face, particularly when out in public and if you or family members are sick. It is also good practice to always have a personal/family emergency plan and review this regularly, as well as having a home emergency kit in place that includes food and water that can be stored in the event of an inability to go out from your home for a period of time.

For those that find themselves anxious about the current outbreak, we suggest following the guidance of HSD's Counseling Unit, which outlines ways to reduce anxiety and provides resources for those who need additional help.

Resources:

For additional situational information and guidance, please see the U.S. CDC FAQs.
For psychological support, the following resources are available:

- **24/7 Helpline for urgent psychological needs**: +1 (202) 458-5600 | DAMA 5220 85600
- **Counseling Unit Main Contact Information (WBG and IMF Staff)**: +1 (202) 458-4457 | DAMA 5220 84457 | hsdcounseling@worldbankgroup.org
- **Family Consultation Service (WBG and IMF spouses, domestic partners, and dependents over 18 years old)**: +1 (202) 458-5550 | DAMA 5220 85550 | familyconsultationservice@wbfn.org
- **Managing Fear and Anxiety over the Novel Coronavirus**