COVID-19
Frequently Asked Questions

Masks & Cloth Face Coverings

NEW Apr. 5 Should I use a facemask?

The use of surgical masks is known to be effective when used by sick persons to prevent the infection of others in a home or other nursing environment. Higher specification N-95 (or equivalent) masks should be reserved for the protection of medical personnel or other high-risk occupations who may have prolonged close contact with sick persons, and need specific training and fit testing for effective use.

Some national and local health authorities require people to wear masks in public places and may even enforce this. You should follow local requirements in such locations.

With increased recognition of the possible role in transmission of asymptomatic infection and the fact that the virus is now present in communities throughout the world, some authorities (including the U.S. CDC) are now recommending more widespread use of cloth face covering by all persons who may be in public places where it is difficult to maintain social distancing (e.g. when out shopping, or using public transport). This is not for protection of the wearer, but rather to limit the spread of respiratory droplets from the wearer to others. Medical masks (either surgical or N-95) should be reserved for the applications described above. The CDC guidance for public use of cloth face coverings by asymptomatic persons can be found here.

Staff who use masks or cloth face coverings when not sick and in public places should always prioritize other preventive measures such as washing their hands often with soap and water and staying away from other people when they are sick. Incorrect use of masks and cloth face coverings can increase the risk of infection. Further information can be found below:

- WHO: Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) advice for the public: When and how to use masks
- CDC: Use of Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19

NEW Apr. 5 If I have a mask, or a cloth face covering, how do I safely use it?

If you decide to wear a mask or cloth face covering, it is important to use it properly, so you do not increase your risk for infection.

Wash your hands with soap and water before putting on the mask/covering. If soap and water are not immediately available, use hand sanitizer. Place the mask/covering carefully over your face and fit it around your nose and under your chin. A medical mask may have a small adjustable metal bar at the top and will provide a better fit.
Once the mask/covering is on your face, do not touch it or adjust it. If you are wearing a fabric mask, be aware that it will become damp as you wear it for longer periods of time, and it will need to be carefully removed.

Wash your hands before removing the mask/covering. Remove the mask/covering and place it in a receptacle. Wash your hands again.

If you intend to reuse the mask:

- Disposable mask: store it in a clean plastic or paper bag or hang it on a hook away from other objects. However, if it has viral particles on it, it will contaminate the inside of the bag and could contaminate your hands and face next time you wear it.
- Cloth face covering: wash it in hot water daily when you wear it and dry it on a hot setting or hang it in the sun.

Finding a Healthcare Provider/Testing

I live and work in the Washington, DC, area and don't have a healthcare provider. I have symptoms of COVID-19, where can I get help?

1. Contact Teladoc (a telehealth provider) to get guidance on what you should do (Aetna MIP). Information on Teladoc can be found at Teladoc.com/Aetna. You can also download the Teladoc app.
2. You can also consider alternative healthcare providers in the Washington, DC, Virginia, or Maryland areas. Please call before arrival:
   - 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

Note: Testing for COVID-19 is based on the doctor's clinical assessment and is not currently done in the U.S. if you do not have symptoms.

The CDC has also created a coronavirus self-checker tool which can help you make decisions. This tool is only intended for use by people currently in the United States.

Remember, in an emergency, first dial 911.
I live in a country office location and do not have a healthcare provider. Where can I get help if I suspect I may be sick with COVID-19?

Please contact the Medical Emergency Response Coordinator (MERC) in your home country if you need urgent medical care. MERC contact details can be found in the country-specific information on the WBG Travel Advisory page.

If you are having a medical emergency, please contact the local emergency number in your location. Then, if additional emergency support is needed, contact the WBG Emergency Line (+1 202-458-8888).

Can I be tested for COVID-19?

Your healthcare provider will determine if you need to be tested for COVID-19. The WBG does not offer preferential access to testing, nor are there WBG doctors who can prescribe testing. In most places, testing cannot be requested by people who are not sick, or who are wanting reassurance that they do not have COVID-19, although a few countries at this time may be doing wider screening tests. Tests are done on people with symptoms who may have a risk of exposure to COVID-19, and in areas where there are shortages of tests, priority may be given to those that are hospitalized, in a higher risk category, or frontline healthcare workers. The main use of a COVID-19 test result at this time is to inform decisions on isolation and contact tracing, to guide appropriate infection control procedures in the hospital, and to track the spread of the outbreak in a community.

Testing does not change the medical treatment you will receive, as there is no specific treatment for COVID-19. All those with less severe symptoms of illness should self-isolate at home and monitor their condition carefully, whether they have a COVID-19 test or not. If symptoms worsen, you should consult with your healthcare provider.

I am Sick/My Dependent is 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/contact your healthcare provider.
- For country offices: If you do not have a healthcare provider, refer to the FAQ: "I live in a country office location and do not have a healthcare provider. Where can I get help if I suspect I may be sick with COVID-19?"
• For Washington, DC, refer to the FAQ: "I live and work in the Washington, DC, area and don't have a healthcare provider. I have symptoms of COVID-19, where can I get help?"
• 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.
• If you have been around others within the last 14 days, then call the WBG Emergency Line (+1 202-458-8888) as soon as possible to notify HSD.

About COVID-19

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/6 feet). It may also occur by touching infected surfaces.

What are the symptoms?

• Fever (38.0°C/100.4°F or higher)
• Cough
• Difficulty breathing
• Fatigue

Other symptoms such as sore throat, and gastrointestinal symptoms may also be present. Symptoms may be mild to severe and can appear from 1 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);
• Become "touch aware." Be mindful of surfaces you are touching (door handles, elevator buttons, handrails, etc.) and wash your 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 the tissue away immediately and wash your hands with soap. Encourage others to do the same;
• In areas with community spread, practice social distancing. Avoid crowded areas or large gatherings to the extent possible.
What does social distancing mean?

In communities with sustained community spread, a number of practices outside of the workplace are being suggested to minimize risk of exposure and transmission of COVID-19. It is all our individual responsibilities to implement these:

- Avoid gatherings of more than 10 people;
- Avoid visiting elderly relatives if possible. People over 65 are at greater risk of severe disease. If possible, minimize exposure of elderly relatives to additional people. If you must visit, practice good hygiene and do not take your children. Connect virtually using your phones/computers;
- Have your children practice social distancing. Minimize/stop playdates, if they are playing at the park, encourage them to keep at least 2 meters/6 feet from other children. About 13% of cases in children are asymptomatic;
- If restaurants are open, do not dine in. Get takeout and when you get home, remove the packaging and throw it away. Wash your hands thoroughly again before eating;
- Do not visit friends/throw private parties. Rather consider going for a walk with individual friends (keeping 2 meters/6 feet apart) in the open air. This reduces the risk of transmission between adults;
- Do not have contractors/friends in your home other than in an absolute emergency;
- Avoid malls and shopping trips other than for essential items;
- Try and visit the grocery store at off-peak periods or when it is quieter. In some areas, grocery stores are limiting the number of people in the store. When standing in line try and maintain your 2 meter/6 foot separation distance. Wash your hands thoroughly when returning home;
- Minimize use of public transportation if you can. If you need to use public transportation, use during off-peak times. Avoid being in cars/buses with lots of people. If you are able, use a private car.

What does a global pandemic mean?

The shift from an epidemic to a pandemic expands the focus from individual containment measures (quarantine and isolation of the sick) to widespread community mitigation (minimizing the impact through public health) measures. Mitigation methods may include limitations of mass gatherings and public events, school closures and strengthening public health systems and hospitals. In some cases, mitigations may include curfews and movement restrictions.

- 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;
• Stay calm, focus on the many simple things you can do to reduce the risk of infection for yourself and your family, and follow local public health guidance.

I am not Sick

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

If you know that have you been in close contact with someone confirmed to have COVID-19 (a colleague or anyone outside of work) 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 do not go to work and practice social distancing for a period of 14 days after the sick individual is declared free of infection. 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.

Staying at Home

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 (38.0 C/100.4 F or greater) at least twice daily and check for symptoms (cough, difficulty breathing, and fatigue);
2. If any of these symptoms develop, follow the guidance in the FAQ: "What should I do if I am sick?";
3. 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;
   • Only people who normally live in the household should be at home.
4. Practice respiratory hygiene (when coughing and sneezing cover your mouth and nose with a flexed elbow or tissue – throw the tissue away immediately and wash your hands with soap. Encourage others to do the same);
5. Reducing boredom during self-isolation by trying to keep up a normal daily routine as far as possible.
What practical steps can I take to address my anxiety about this situation?

It is natural to be concerned, and to worry over the unknowns.

Taking practical steps to prepare your household for COVID-19 will help. Have a personal/family emergency plan and review this regularly.

Stock up on prescriptions and have 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 long period.

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 seeking additional information.

For psychological support, the following resources are available:

- **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**

**Travel**

If I have traveled to a country with COVID-19 transmission, should I stay at my residence upon my return to the duty station and avoid contact with others?

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

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 returning from countries with widespread transmission – including the United States - do not need to stay at home and avoid contact with others if they are not ill, unless required to do so by local health authorities. However, if 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.