

PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT

COVID-19: What You Need to Know

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COVID-19 (novel coronavirus 2019) is caused by a virus known as SARS-CoV-2. People infected with this virus often have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing. Most will not become severely ill, but some do. The virus is primarily spread from person-to-person when a sick person coughs, sneezes or speaks near others. It can also be spread after touching a surface that the virus has contacted and then touching your mouth, nose or eyes. The virus spreads most easily when people are showing symptoms. However, it can also be spread when someone has no symptoms at all.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms start between 2–14 days after a person is infected. Symptoms can include fever, dry cough, tiredness, muscle aches and trouble breathing. Less common symptoms can include headache, sore throat, runny nose, problems with the sense of smell or taste, nausea or diarrhea. Some people do not have any symptoms.

Most people will get better within a few weeks, but in others, COVID-19 can lead to serious medical problems such as pneumonia, not getting enough oxygen, heart problems or even death. Serious medical problems are more common in individuals 65 years and older and those with medical problems such as heart disease, diabetes, lung disease, cancer or obesity.

TESTING

If your doctor or nurse suspects that you have COVID-19, a swab may be taken from inside your nose or mouth and sent to the laboratory for testing. There is also a blood test that shows if a person has had COVID-19 however this test is not currently available.

TREATMENT

There is no specific treatment for COVID-19 and many people will stay at home until they get better. People with serious problems may need to go to the hospital for management.

UNPROVEN TREATMENTS

You may have heard that using a hand dryer, rinsing out your nose with saltwater or taking antibiotics can lower your risk, but

these recommendations are not medically proven. There is also no evidence that taking vitamins will help with the recovery or prevention of this virus.

LOWER YOUR RISK

Currently, there is no vaccination to prevent COVID-19. To help slow the spread of the infection, it is important to practice social distancing and stay at least six feet away from other people. Avoid social gatherings and wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Avoid touching your face with your hands, especially your mouth, nose or eyes. Clean and disinfect any frequently touched surfaces. Avoid traveling if possible and cover your face with a mask. Avoid any public transportation, ridesharing, or taxis for travel. Separate yourself from others and pets in your home.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU COME IN CONTACT WITH A COVID-19 POSITIVE PERSON

If you believe you were in close contact with a COVID-19 positive person and do not have any symptoms, perform a self-quarantine at home for at least 14 days. Remember that everyone is at risk of contracting this virus.

As we learn more about this virus, expert recommendations will continue to change. You can find more information about COVID-19 from the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO). Check with your doctor or public health official to get the most up-to-date information about how to protect yourself. If you require medical attention, please call ahead. If you have a fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, call your doctor or local health care department.



SOURCE(S): UpToDate, United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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