Q: What is 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)?

A: There are many types of human coronaviruses including some that commonly cause mild upper-respiratory tract illnesses. COVID-19 is a new disease, caused by a novel (or new) coronavirus not previously seen in humans. COVID-19 was identified as the cause of an outbreak of respiratory illness first detected in Wuhan, China, that has spread around the world, including the United States and all 50 states. The latest situation summary updates are available on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention webpage [2019 Novel Coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html).

Q: What is the source of the virus?

A: Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in people and many different species of animals, including camels, cattle, cats and bats. Early on, many of the patients at the epicenter of the COVID-19 outbreak in China had some link to a large seafood and live animal market, suggesting animal-to-person spread. Later, a growing number of patients reportedly did not have exposure to animal markets, indicating person-to-person spread. Person-to-person spread was subsequently reported outside China, including the United States.

Q: What does it mean that COVID-19 is a Global Pandemic?

A: A pandemic is a global outbreak of disease. Pandemics happen when a new virus emerges to infect people and can spread between people. Because there is little to no pre-existing immunity against the new virus, it spreads worldwide. The virus that causes COVID-19 is infecting people and spreading easily from person-to-person. Cases have been detected in most countries worldwide, including the United States, which has recorded cases in all 50 states.
Q: What are the symptoms of COVID-2019?

A: People who are infected with COVID-19 have developed mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms including fever, cough, shortness of breath, and potentially respiratory distress 2-14 days after exposure. Call your health care provider for medical advice if you think you have been exposed to COVID-19 and develop a fever and symptoms, such as cough or difficulty breathing.

Q: How does COVID-19 spread?

A: COVID-19 has been shown to spread between people. Someone who is actively sick with COVID-19 can spread the illness to others, so CDC recommends these patients be isolated either in the hospital or at home (depending on the severity of their illness) until they are better and no longer pose a risk of infecting others. Human coronaviruses typically spread through the air by coughing and sneezing. How long someone is actively sick can vary so the decision on when to release someone from isolation is made on a case-by-case basis in consultation with doctors, infection prevention and control experts, and public health officials and involves considering specifics of each situation, including disease severity, illness signs and symptoms, and results of laboratory testing for that patient.

Current CDC guidance for when it is OK to release someone from isolation is made on a case by case basis and includes meeting all of the following requirements:

- The patient is free from fever without the use of fever-reducing medications for at least 72 hours.
- The patient is no longer showing symptoms, including cough.
- It has been at least 7 days since the onset of the patient’s illness.

This recommendation is to help prevent most, but may not prevent all, instances of secondary spread. According to CDC, the risk of transmission after recovery is likely very substantially less than that during illness.

Someone who has been released from isolation is not considered to pose a risk of infection to others.

Q: How is COVID-19 diagnosed?
A: Diagnosis occurs through laboratory testing of respiratory specimens. Some coronavirus strains cause the common cold and patients tested by their health care provider may test positive for these types.

Q: Can someone spread the virus without being sick?

A: People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest). Some spread might be possible before people show symptoms. There have been reports of this occurring with COVID-19, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

Q: Will warm weather stop the outbreak of COVID-19?

It is not yet known whether weather and temperature impact the spread of COVID-19. Some other viruses, like the common cold and flu, spread more during cold weather months but that does not mean it is impossible to become sick with these viruses during other months. At this time it is not known whether the spread of COVID-19 will decrease when weather becomes warmer. There is much more to learn about the transmissibility, severity and other features associated with COVID-19 and investigations are ongoing.

Q: What does the Governor’s stay at home order mean?

A stay at home order directs Illinoisans to stop movements outside of their homes beyond essential needs. By limiting social interactions, the chance of spreading COVID-19 is greatly reduced.

Q: Why is this stay at home order necessary?

The COVID-19 pandemic presents an unprecedented health threat. If Illinois took no action to combat the spread, current modeling indicates many thousands of people in our state could die.

Q: When is it okay for me to leave my home?

You may leave your home ONLY to perform the following allowable activities:
- **Health and safety** – obtaining emergency services, visiting a healthcare professional, picking up medical supplies or medications
- **Outdoor activities** – walking, hiking, jogging, biking
- **Supplies and Services** – shopping for groceries, gasoline, take-out food, products necessary to maintain the safety, sanitation and essential operations of homes
- **Care of others** – travel to care for the elderly, family member, persons with disabilities or underlying health conditions, a friend or pet in another household
- **Essential businesses** – travel to perform work providing essential products and services, such as health care and public health, public safety, governmental functions, banks, food and agriculture, and media
- **Funerals** – permissible provided the gathering consists of no more than 10 attendees and the space utilized allows for social distancing (6 feet spacing between people). If possible, venues should make accommodations for remote attendance. If you do leave home, stay at least 6 feet apart for other people. Everyone is encouraged to stay active outside during this time, provided they practice safe social distancing.

**Q: What is social distancing?**

A: Social distancing is deliberately increasing the physical space between people to avoid spreading illness. Staying at least 6 feet away from other people reduces the chances of catching COVID-19. Other examples of social distancing with the goal of avoiding crowds, crowded spaces and mass gatherings include working from home instead of the office, closing schools and switching to on-line classes, visiting loved ones by electronic devices instead of in person, suspending worship services, and canceling or postponing large meetings.

**Q: What is the state recommending for social distancing?**

Gov. JB Pritzker has prohibited public and private gatherings of 10 or more people through April 30. This includes community, civic, public leisure, faith-based events, sporting events with spectators, concerts, conventions and any similar event or activity that brings together 10 or more people in a room or space at the same. The governor also, by Executive Order, closed schools, bars and restaurants through April 30. Restaurant kitchens can remain open and put in place drive-thru, curbside pickup and delivery options. The Illinois Gaming Board has suspended video gaming through April 30.

**Q: Can I go outdoors?**

A: Yes, go outdoors for fresh air and exercise. Ride a bike, walk the dog, go for a hike, jog. Social distancing does not mean staying indoors, it means avoiding close contact.
with people. Remember to wash your hands any time you enter from outdoors and before you eat.

**Q: Can I go to the supermarket?**

A: Yes. Buy as much as you need to lessen the number of trips and try and shop when the store is least likely to be crowded. Some grocery stores have designated special hours for the elderly (over age 60), pregnant women and those with compromised immune systems to lessen their exposure to large crowds and possible exposure to COVID-19.

**Q: How can I help protect myself?**

A: Follow these tips to help prevent COVID-19:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick with respiratory symptoms.
- 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.
- If you have not already done so, discuss influenza vaccination with your health care provider to help protect you against seasonal influenza.

**Q: Should I wear a facemask?**

A: Cover your mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when around others.

- You could spread COVID-19 to others even if you do not feel sick. Everyone should wear a cloth face cover when they have to go out in public, for example to the grocery store or to pick up other necessities.
- Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.
- The cloth face cover is meant to protect other people in case you are infected.
- Do NOT use a facemask meant for a healthcare worker.
- Continue to keep about 6 feet between yourself and others. The cloth face cover is not a substitute for social distancing.

**Q: What steps should parents take to protect children?**

*Answer:* This is a new virus and we are still learning about it, but so far, there does not seem to be a lot of illness in children. Most illness, including serious illness, is happening in adults of working age and older adults. Discourage children and teens from gathering in other public places while school is dismissed to help slow the spread of COVID-19 in the community. Encourage frequent handwashing and follow other prevention tips.

**Q: Who is at higher risk?**

*Answer:* COVID-19 is a new disease and we are learning more about it every day. Older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions may be at higher risk for more serious complications from COVID-19. Based upon available information to date, the CDC has said those most at risk include:

- People 65 years and older
- People who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility
- People who are pregnant
- People of any age with the following underlying medical conditions, particularly those that are not well controlled:
  - Chronic lung disease or asthma
  - Congestive heart failure or coronary artery disease
  - Diabetes
  - Neurologic conditions that weaken the ability to cough
  - Weakened immune system
  - Chemotherapy radiation for cancer (currently or in recent past)
  - Sickle cell anemia
  - Chronic kidney diseases requiring dialysis
  - Cirrhosis of the liver
  - Lack of spleen or a spleen that doesn’t function correctly
  - Extreme obesity (body mass index (BMI) great than or equal to 40)

**Q: Should I clean “high touch” surfaces?**
A: Yes. Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets and sinks. If surfaces are dirty, clean them using detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection. To disinfect, most common EPA-registered household disinfectants will work.

Q: Is there a vaccine?

A: No. Currently, there is not a vaccine for COVID-19.

Q: What are the treatments for COVID-19?

A: Currently, there are no specific treatments recommended for illnesses caused by COVID-19. Medical care is supportive to help relieve symptoms.

Q: Can I get COVID-19 from my pet?

A: At this time, there is no evidence that pets or other animals can spread COVID-19 or that they might be a source of infection in the United States. The thousands of worldwide cases have been human-to-human transmission.

Q: Can I give COVID-19 to my pet?

A: To date, there is no evidence of human-to-pet illness in pets. There have been no reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19.

Q: Do I need to get my pet tested for COVID-19?

A: No. At this time, routine testing of animals for COVID-19 is not recommended.

Q: Can animals carry the virus that causes COVID-19 on their skin or fur?

A: At this time, there is no evidence that the virus that causes COVID-19 can spread to people from the skin or fur of pets. Talk to your veterinarian about the best ways to care for your pet.
Q: Should I avoid contact with pets or other animals if I am sick with COVID-19?

A: You should restrict contact with pets and other animals while you are sick with COVID-19, just like you would around other people. Although there have not been reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19, it is still recommended that people sick with COVID-19 limit contact with animals until more information is known about the new coronavirus. When possible, have another member of your household care for your animals while you are sick. If you are sick with COVID-19, avoid contact with your pet, including petting, snuggling, being kissed or licked, and sharing food. If you must care for your pet or be around animals while you are sick, wash your hands before and after you interact with pets.

Q: What should health care providers, laboratories and health departments do?

A: Health care providers and laboratories should report suspect COVID-19 cases immediately (within 3 hours) to their local health department, who should report cases to IDPH within the same time frame. For recommendations and guidance, see the IDPH Coronavirus Page or the CDC's web page 2019 Novel Coronavirus.

Q: What are public health departments in Illinois doing about this situation?

A: IDPH and local health departments have implemented heightened surveillance to identify and test patients most likely to have COVID-19. Public health experts are communicating with and educating health care providers and other public health partners about the current situation. Measures are being developed to prevent the spread of illness in Illinois. Frequent communication with the public will be available through the IDPH Coronavirus Page.


Español

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