

GENERAL FAQ - FALL 2021

What are coronaviruses?

*Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in both humans and animals. There are currently seven strains of human coronaviruses that have been identified. Four of these strains are common throughout the world and typically cause a mild respiratory illness. Other strains of coronavirus cause more severe illnesses, including SARS and MERS. In 2019, a new strain of human coronavirus emerged, SARS-CoV-2, that causes COVID-19. Additionally, information related to the new Coronavirus delta variant can found on the following link: **Click on the link, then press Enter!***

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/variants/variant.html?s_cid=11512:cdc%20delta%20variant:sem.ga:p:RG:GM:gen:PTN:FY21

How is COVID-19 transmitted?

Via person-to-person transmission: the SARS-CoV-2 virus spreads between persons in close contact; the longer the interaction and closer the proximity of individuals, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread. It is primarily transmitted through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. Droplets can land in the mouths, noses, or eyes of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs of those within close proximity (within about 6 feet). Touching a contaminated surface and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth can also be a source of infection, however, new research is showing that surface transmission is not the main mode. In

general, the more closely a person interacts with others and the longer that interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread. COVID-19 can be aerosolized during respiratory treatments with a nebulizer and by certain invasive procedures such as bronchoscopy or intubation. Aerosolizing procedures lead to airborne transmission of the virus and require higher levels of respiratory protection.

What is the incubation period for COVID-19?

The mean incubation period (time from exposure to the onset of symptoms) is estimated at 4 days, with a median of 5.1 days (95% CI 4.5-5.8 days). About 98% of infected persons develop symptoms within 12 days. Data for human infection with other coronaviruses (e.g., MERS-CoV, SARS-CoV) suggest that the incubation period may range from 2-14 days. [CDC, Annals Int Med]

Who is at risk for COVID-19?

Anyone who has not been previously infected by COVID-19 is at risk of infection. Current groups considered to be at an elevated risk of exposure include:

- People in places where ongoing community spread of the virus that causes COVID-19 has been reported, with the level of risk dependent on the location. Parish/county level incidence rates can be found at [Key Metrics for COVID Suppression](#).*
- Health care workers caring for patients with COVID-19.*
- Close contacts of persons with COVID-19.*

- *Travelers returning from affected locations where community spread is occurring, with the level of risk dependent on where they traveled.*

Risk factors for developing severe illness may include, but are not limited to, older age, people who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility, individuals of any age with underlying chronic medical conditions such as lung disease, moderate or severe asthma, cancer, heart failure, cardiovascular disease, renal disease, liver disease, diabetes, immunocompromising conditions, and pregnancy. Individuals with a BMI greater than or equal to 40 also seem to be at increased risk of developing severe illness. While older age is a risk factor, COVID-19 does not discriminate solely on the basis of age.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Reported illnesses have ranged from very mild (including some with no reported symptoms) to severe, including illness resulting in death. The most commonly reported symptoms include fever (77–98%), cough (46%–82%), myalgia or fatigue (11–52%), and shortness of breath (3–31%) at illness onset. Other less commonly reported respiratory symptoms include sore throat, headache, cough with sputum production and/or hemoptysis. Some patients have experienced gastrointestinal symptoms such as diarrhea and nausea prior to developing fever and lower respiratory tract signs and symptoms. The complete clinical picture with regard to COVID-19 is not fully known. [CDC]

Are asymptomatic persons infectious?

Probably. Recent evidence of transmission by mildly symptomatic and asymptomatic persons suggest that the time

from exposure to onset of infectiousness (latent period) may be shorter than the incubation period. Infected persons likely shed virus in their respiratory secretions prior to developing or recognizing symptoms. This has important implications for transmission dynamics, but the contribution to overall spread is yet to be determined.

How long are people infectious with COVID-19?

Most likely from 24-48 hours prior to the onset of symptoms, to at least 10 days after symptom onset. Some people will continue to shed virus after this time however. Isolation is recommended to continue for a minimum of 10 days after the onset of symptoms. For those who test positive for COVID-19 but never develop symptoms, isolation is recommended for 10 days after positive test. See CDC Guidance for home isolation without testing.

What is the treatment for COVID-19?

Covid-19 vaccines are effective at helping protect against severe diseases and death from variants of the virus. In addition, covid-19 vaccines are safe and effective and diminish the risk of people spreading the virus. For instance, studies have shown that Covid-19 vaccines are effective in keeping persons from getting Covid-19.

What is self-monitoring?

Persons with an elevated risk of exposure to COVID-19 or known exposure to a person with confirmed COVID-19 infection may be asked to “self-monitor” for symptoms. This means they should measure (and record) their temperature twice daily and watch for fever, cough, or trouble breathing. In the event these

symptoms develop, or they have a fever greater than 100.4°F, they should contact a health care provider.

What about contacts of contacts?

Persons who are contacts of exposed but asymptomatic persons are not considered to be at increased risk, and no special guidance applies. For example, the roommate of an exposed person who is in self-quarantine is not restricted in their activities. For more information, consult the CDC COVID-19 website for the definition of what constitutes an exposure.

I think I have been in the same place as someone with COVID-19. What is my risk?

The CDC assigns various levels of risk of exposure to coronavirus. Use this guidance to discern your likelihood of exposure:

- high: living in the same household as, being an intimate partner of, or providing care in a nonhealthcare setting (such as a home) for a person with symptomatic laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 infection (without using recommended precautions)*
- medium: close contact with a person with symptomatic laboratory-confirmed COVID-19; on an aircraft, seated within 6 feet of a traveler with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19; living in the same household as, being an intimate partner of, or caring for a person in a nonhealthcare setting with symptomatic laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 infection (while using recommended precautions)*

- *low: being in the same indoor environment (e.g., a classroom, hospital waiting room) as a symptomatic laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 case for a prolonged period of time but not meeting the definition of close contact*

[Read details on exposure risk and close contact from the CDC here.](#)

What should I do if I think I may have symptoms or may need testing?

You should first contact your healthcare provider by phone. Your physician can help you determine whether testing is necessary. You can also contact the Caddo Parish Health Unit at 318-676-5222 for information. For information on testing locations, visit the [Louisiana Department of Health website](#).

Any ill person seeking health care should be advised:

- *Call your health care provider for advice.*
- *If you have fever and are experiencing difficulty breathing, call 911.*
- *If advised to leave home and seek care avoid using public transportation, ridesharing, or taxis.*
- *Wear a facemask.*
- *Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and dispose of tissue in an enclosed receptacle.*

Who should NOT get tested?

COVID-19 testing is typically not indicated for patients without an exposure risk who have mild respiratory illness or who are asymptomatic. If the prevalence of COVID-19 in communities increases substantially and widespread transmission is understood to be occurring, then testing individuals with mild symptoms will become less informative in ambulatory settings. Testing will continue to play a critical role for hospitalized patients and for symptomatic health care workers, to inform infection control strategies and prevent infections within medically vulnerable groups. Your local health department may provide additional guidance.

How to properly wear mask?

Cloth masks should—

- fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face*
- be secured with ties or ear loops*
- include multiple layers of fabric*
- allow for breathing without restriction*
- be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape*

Should cloth masks be washed or otherwise cleaned regularly? How regularly?

Yes. They should be routinely washed depending on the frequency of use.

How does one safely sterilize/clean a cloth mask?

A washing machine should suffice in properly washing a cloth mask.

How does one safely remove a used cloth mask?

Individuals should be careful not to touch their eyes, nose, and mouth when removing their cloth mask and wash hands immediately after removing.

What is social distancing?

Social distancing means remaining out of congregate settings, avoiding mass gatherings, and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet or 2 meters) from others. Each person with whom a person is in contact brings their prior contacts; therefore, one should consider that contacts outside one's household would also include that person's outside contacts, thus increasing risk.