FAST FACTS:

- COVID-19 is a new infectious disease that affects your lungs and airways.
- The key symptoms of COVID-19 are a high temperature, dry cough, tiredness and loss of taste or smell.
- COVID-19 affects different people in different ways. Some people do not have any symptoms and may not even know they have the virus, while others get seriously ill and need hospital care.
- Physical distancing, wearing a face mask around other people and frequent handwashing are some of the best ways to prevent COVID-19.
- If you think you have symptoms of COVID-19, stay at home and call your local health authority. They will tell you what to do next.

This page is updated regularly, make sure you come back for the latest information.

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19, otherwise known as coronavirus disease 2019, is a new infectious disease that affects your lungs and airways.
What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Most people who feel ill with COVID-19 will have at least one of the key symptoms:

- fever
- dry cough
- tiredness
- loss of taste or smell

Other symptoms include: nasal congestion, conjunctivitis (red eyes), sore throat, headache, muscle of joint pain, skin rash, nausea or vomiting, diarrhoea, chills or dizziness.

Some people get more seriously ill with COVID-19 and may have symptoms such as shortness of breath, loss of appetite, chest pain or a high temperature. These people will need medical care. In severe cases, COVID-19 can lead to death.

COVID-19 affects different people in different ways. Some people do not have any symptoms and may not even know they have the virus. You can still pass COVID-19 on even if you aren’t showing any symptoms, so it’s important to always follow the prevention advice.

Who is most at-risk from COVID-19?

Anyone can get COVID-19 and become seriously ill. However, people over 60 years old and those with health conditions such as high blood pressure, heart or lung problems, diabetes or cancer are at a higher risk of developing serious illness.
People living with HIV who have a compromised immune system – those with a low CD4 count, a high viral load or recent opportunistic infection – are also more at-risk.

There is currently no evidence to suggest that people living with HIV and on effective antiretroviral treatment are at an increased risk of getting COVID-19 or developing severe symptoms. See our page on COVID-19 and living with HIV.

**How is COVID-19 passed on?**

COVID-19 is passed on through contact with respiratory droplets of a person currently infected with the virus. These droplets come from the nose or mouth of an infected person when they sneeze, cough, breathe, speak or sing.

The virus may be spread when people come into close contact with an infected person, and breathe in these tiny droplets.

COVID-19 spreads more in certain settings where people are closer together, especially indoor, crowded and poorly ventilated spaces that involve close contact, such as restaurants, gyms, nightclubs, offices and places of worship.

The droplets from coughs and sneezes can also land on surfaces. The virus is then spread when another person comes into contact with these droplets and touches their own eyes, nose or mouth.

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**What is COVID-19 and how is it passed on?**

**COVID-19** is a new infectious disease that affects your lungs and airways.

It’s caused by a virus that’s spread in droplets from the mouth and nose when you cough, breathe, speak or sing.

**You can get the virus by:**

1. Having close contact with someone with COVID-19 and breathing in droplets exhaled by them.
2. Touching contaminated surfaces and then touching your face.

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Source: WHO
How can I prevent COVID-19?

The best ways to protect yourself and others from COVID-19 are:

1. Staying at least one metre away from people as much as possible, and even greater distance when you are indoors.
2. Wearing a face mask when you are around others.

There are two types of face masks, fabric masks (which you can make yourself and are suitable for most people) and medical masks. As they are in short supply, medical masks should only be worn by healthcare workers, people with COVID-19 symptoms and those caring for suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19. When it’s not possible to maintain a distance of one meter from others, people over 60 and those with underlying health conditions should also wear medical masks.

Both fabric and medical-grade face masks are only effective when used correctly and alongside other prevention measures. For more information on wearing masks, see our FAQs.

You can also prevent the spread of COVID-19 by:

- Avoiding places that are crowded, confined or involve close contact with others, especially indoors.
- Washing your hands regularly and properly using soap and water. You can use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser if you do not have access to water or soap.
- Avoiding touching your face.
- Covering your mouth and nose with a clean tissue when you sneeze or cough. Throw the tissue away and wash your hands after. If you don’t have a tissue, cover your face with the inside of your elbow.
- Cleaning and disinfecting surfaces regularly.
- Staying at home and calling a health care worker for advice if you feel unwell – even if you only have mild symptoms. They will tell you if you should test for COVID-19 or if you need to self-isolate.
What should I do if I think I have COVID-19?

If you have symptoms of COVID-19, stay at home and call your local health authority. Don’t visit the clinic, as you could pass the virus onto others.

The people you live with should also stay home for at least 14 days from when you first noticed symptoms to prevent the virus from being passed on. Ask friends or neighbours to bring you any supplies you need. They should leave these outside and not enter your home.

Most people with COVID-19 recover from the virus without the need for hospital treatment. If your symptoms don’t improve after seven days, or if you have difficulty breathing and persistent pain in your chest, call your local health service immediately.
Find out more about what to do if you think you have COVID-19.

HELP US HELP OTHERS

Avert.org is helping to prevent the spread of HIV and improve sexual health by giving people trusted, up-to-date information.

We provide all this for FREE, but it takes time and money to keep Avert.org going.

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