

COVID-19: Myths and facts



FAST FACTS

- COVID-19 is a new infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.
- Knowing the facts about COVID-19 symptoms, how the virus is passed on and what you can do to stop it will help you protect yourself and your community.
- There is a lot of misinformation about COVID-19 so it's important to check that the information you use comes from a reliable source such as the [World Health Organization](#) or your government health authority.

Misinformation and myths about coronavirus (COVID-19) have been spreading fast. We asked our users to share the most common COVID-19 myths that they've heard, so we can put the record straight.

Symptoms and severity

Will most people who get COVID-19 get very sick or die?

FACT: Most people who get COVID-19 will have a mild form of the illness and will be able to recover at home, without needing hospital treatment. Stay home and call your local health authority for advice if you have any symptoms of COVID-19. If you have difficulty breathing, persistent pain in your chest or loss of speech or mobility, call your health provider straight away.

Can you always tell if someone has COVID-19?

FACT: No. The virus that causes COVID-19 can be in someone's body for up to 14 days before they get

symptoms, and some people will have such a mild case of COVID-19 that they might not have any symptoms.

You can still pass COVID-19 on, even if you don't have any symptoms. That's why it is important that everyone follows the prevention advice – such social distancing, wearing a face mask and regularly washing their hands – even if they feel healthy.

Who's at risk?

Does COVID-19 only affect rich people?

FACT: Anyone can get COVID-19, regardless of how much money they have. COVID-19 has affected people from all over the world, including people of all backgrounds, races, ages and financial statuses.

Does COVID-19 only affect old people, meaning young people don't have to worry?

FACT: While COVID-19 can be more dangerous in older people, anyone can get it including young people, some of whom become seriously ill. While we don't yet fully understand why some people get more serious symptoms, we do know that young people are more likely to develop serious symptoms if they have certain underlying health conditions, including obesity, diabetes, cancer or high blood pressure.¹

Are people living with HIV more likely to get seriously ill?

FACT: We are still learning about the risk of developing severe COVID-19 for people living with HIV. Current evidence suggests that people living with HIV have a higher risk, but less so than other health conditions, including obesity, diabetes, severe asthma, heart or lung problems, stroke, dementia or older age.

If you are living with HIV, the best way to stay healthy is to continue taking your antiretroviral treatment. This will keep your immune system strong, so you can deal with infections. If you are worried that you might have HIV, get [tested](#) so you can start treatment if you need it.

Vaccines

Are the COVID-19 vaccines safe?

FACT: Yes. The COVID-19 vaccines currently in use have all been through a rigorous testing and approval procedure to ensure they are safe and effective.

Many of the COVID-19 vaccine trials have included people living with HIV, and so far the results show that the vaccines are safe for people with HIV.

As with most vaccines, some people may experience mild symptoms in the days after having a COVID-19 vaccination. This can include a sore arm, mild fever or generally feeling unwell. A small number of people have had an allergic reaction after being vaccinated, but this is very rare and can be safely managed.

Prevention, treatment and cure

Are the drugs used in antiretroviral treatment for HIV effective against COVID-19?

FACT: There is currently no evidence that antiretroviral drugs used in HIV treatments can treat or prevent COVID-19.

If you're living with HIV, you should continue taking your antiretroviral treatment to protect your immune system. You will also need to follow the general prevention advice for COVID-19, as there's no evidence that antiretroviral treatment for HIV provides any immunity to COVID-19.

It's also important that you don't share your HIV drugs with anyone else who has COVID-19 or is worried about getting it. These should only be taken if prescribed by a doctor.

Are anti-malaria drugs effective against COVID-19?

FACT: There's currently no evidence that antimalarial drugs can treat or prevent COVID-19.

The main clinical trial trying to find an effective treatment for COVID-19 stopped its investigation into the anti-malarial drug, hydroxychloroquine, in summer 2020. This was after it found no evidence that the drug could prevent people from needing ventilation or dying, or speed up their recovery.

Other trials are currently ongoing to find an effective treatment against COVID-19.

Can COVID-19 be passed on in warm sunny weather?

FACT: You can get COVID-19 no matter how sunny and warm it is. Exposing yourself to the sun or high temperatures does not prevent or treat COVID-19. So, whatever the weather you should follow the official advice to protect yourself from the virus.

Getting out into the sunshine, if you can, is still a good idea as this helps your body produce vitamin D which is important for your immune system.

Can hot drinks stop COVID-19?

FACT: There is no drink, hot or cold, that will protect you from coronavirus or cure the illness. Most people who get COVID-19 recover by themselves. Taking paracetamol, drinking lots of liquids, and getting enough rest can help you manage your symptoms.

Should I use a strong disinfectant to clean my hands and body to protect myself from COVID-19?

FACT: You shouldn't use strong disinfectant to clean your body. Washing your hands thoroughly with soap and water or rubbing an alcohol-based sanitizer on them will stop the virus from being passed on. Using stronger chemicals on your skin can be dangerous. Never drink disinfectant or hand sanitizer as this can do serious damage.

Can drinking alcohol cure or prevent COVID-19?

FACT: Drinking alcohol doesn't cure or prevent COVID-19. In fact, drinking alcohol can weaken your

immune system. It's recommended that adults limit their alcohol intake to stay healthy.

Drinking high strength ethanol, as found in some cleaning products or hand sanitizers, can be very dangerous. You must not consume these products. They will not protect you from COVID-19 and instead drinking these products could cause disability or death.

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.

Can you support us and protect our future?

Every contribution helps, no matter how small.

PLEASE DONATE NOW

1. Cunningham, J.W.; Vaduganathan, M; Claggett, B.L.; et al (2020) '[Clinical Outcomes in Young US Adults Hospitalized With COVID-19](#)' JAMA Intern Med. 2021;181(3)



Sources:

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