2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

What are coronaviruses?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Some coronaviruses can cause illness in people and others can cause illness in animals. Rarely, animal coronaviruses can infect people, and more rarely, these can then spread from person-to-person through close contact.

What is the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)?

Novel coronaviruses are new strains of coronaviruses that have not been previously identified in humans. A novel coronavirus has emerged in Wuhan, China which is called the 2019 Novel Coronavirus or COVID-19.

Signs and Symptoms

In general, human coronaviruses commonly cause mild but occasionally more severe respiratory infections. It is estimated that they cause about 15% of common colds. Coronaviruses can also cause more severe illness, such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS).
Some of the symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Muscle aches and tiredness
- Difficulty breathing
- Less commonly: sore throat, headache and diarrhea have been reported.

Older patients and those with chronic medical conditions may be at higher risk for severe illness.

Diagnosis and Testing

In general, coronavirus infections are diagnosed by a healthcare provider based on signs, symptoms, and laboratory tests. Travel history is also important. There is a specific test for COVID-19 to confirm the infection if it is suspected.

Treatment

There is no specific antiviral treatment for COVID-19. People ill with COVID-19 should receive supportive care to help relieve symptoms. People with more severe illness may require hospitalization.

Prevention

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to this virus. Prevention measures include:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are ill.
- Stay home when you are ill.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then immediately throw the tissue in the garbage and clean your hands.
- If you don’t have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your sleeve or arm.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a household cleaner.
- Prior to travelling, check the Public Health Agency of Canada – Travel Advice and Advisories website (https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories) for up-to-date travel information.

Advice for people who have recently returned from China (mainland), Hong Kong, South Korea, Japan, Singapore, Iran, or Italy, OR have had close contact with a person ill with COVID-19

Those who have recently travelled from Hubei Province, China (including Wuhan City) OR have had close contact with a person ill with COVID-19 are asked to **self-isolate** (see self-isolation below) for a total of 14 days after last exposure (i.e., last day in Hubei or last contact with a person ill with COVID-19). Contact Toronto Public Health at 416-338-7600.

Those who have recently travelled from China (other than Hubei Province), Hong Kong, South Korea, Japan, Singapore, Iran, or Italy are asked to watch for signs and symptoms which may develop up to 14 days after an exposure (i.e., last date of travel). **If you develop symptoms** of COVID-19, you must **self-isolate** (see self-isolation below) and follow-up with a healthcare provider. Tell your healthcare provider about your symptoms and travel history **before** going to a medical office or an emergency department. This will allow the healthcare provider to prepare for your visit and protect other patients.

Self-isolation

Persons diagnosed with COVID-19 or those who are suspected of having COVID-19 should **STAY HOME**. Specifically, **DO NOT** attend child care, school or work. **AVOID** public spaces, contact with others, taking public transit; and refrain from having visitors.

Public Health's Role

All suspected and confirmed cases of COVID-19 are reportable to local health authorities under the Health Protection and Promotion Act. Toronto Public Health is following-up on all suspect or confirmed COVID-19 cases and their contacts; and is working collaboratively with provincial and national health agencies; as well as local partners including hospitals, local airports, and community agencies; to contain spread and lessen the impact of the virus. At this time the virus is not circulating locally, however given the global circumstances, we are actively working with our City and health partners to plan for the potential of local spread.

Transmission/Spread

COVID-19 is spread person-to-person through large respiratory droplets (e.g., coughing, sneezing) that can travel up to two metres. It may also be possible for a person to get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes. COVID-19 is an emerging disease and there is more to learn about how it spreads.

More information

- For more information, contact Toronto Health Connection: 416-338-7600.
- Ontario Ministry of Health. The 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Situation Summary. https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/summary.html
- City of Toronto. Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/health-wellness-care/diseases-medications-vaccines/coronavirus/
- Public Health Ontario. Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/diseases-and-conditions/infectious-diseases/respiratory-diseases/novel-coronavirus