

About COVID-19

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Common symptoms may include one or more of the following: fever, cough, headache, muscle and or joint aches and pains, sore throat, chills, runny nose, nasal congestion, conjunctivitis, dizziness, fatigue, nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, loss of appetite (difficulty feeding for children), loss of sense of taste or smell, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing. These may be unexplained new or worsening symptoms, and may vary. Some people experience mild symptoms or no symptoms at all. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death. Older people or those with chronic illnesses may be at higher risk for a more severe form of the disease.

What is COVID-19?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. They can cause diseases ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV). Some cause illness in people, while others circulate among animals. Some coronaviruses transmit easily from person to person while others do not.

COVID-19 is a new virus that has not been previously identified. At present it is causing mild to moderately severe symptoms and some deaths. The virus spreads through close person-to-person contact. As with new viruses, further details will be available as we learn more.

How does COVID-19 spread?

The infection transmits via coughing and sneezing (droplet transmission). It can also be spread by touching surfaces with the virus on it and then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands. While it is not yet known exactly how long COVID19 lives on surfaces, preliminary evidence suggests it can live on objects and surfaces from a few hours to several days. Therefore, isolation at home or hospital is important to prevent transmission.

It is recommended to maintain a social distance of ideally two metres and at minimum one metre.

How is COVID-19 treated?

As with most respiratory illnesses, most people with COVID-19 illness will recover on their own. There is no specific treatment for disease caused by COVID-19. Severe or worsening symptoms may require supportive treatment in hospital.

If symptoms feel worse than a standard cold, see a health care provider or call HealthLine at 811. If HealthLine 811 recommends you seek acute care, they will provide instruction to call ahead.

Information on the COVID-19 vaccine is available at saskatchewan.ca/COVID19-vaccine.

How can we protect ourselves?

Currently, there is no approved vaccine that protects people against coronaviruses.

As a respiratory illness, the best method to protect yourself against COVID-19 is to practise everyday preventive actions, including:

- Practise proper cough and sneezing etiquette (into the bend of your elbow);
- Wash your hands often with soap and water; if soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer;
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands;
- Maintain safe food practices; and
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid unnecessary travel to affected areas.
- Avoid large crowds and practice social distancing (do not shake hands, hug or kiss).

There is no evidence that surgical masks protect persons who are not sick. The World Health Organization does not recommend the use of any masks if you do not have a travel history and respiratory symptoms. If you have respiratory symptoms such as cough or difficulty breathing and a relevant travel history you should wear a surgical/procedure mask when seeking medical care at a health facility. If you are going to a health care facility for treatment of your respiratory illness and do not have a mask, ask for one at the admission desk and one will be provided to you.

What should caregivers know?

If HealthLine 811, public health officials or your healthcare provider have advised you to self-isolate, you may be cared for at home.

If you are providing care to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 at home, it's recommended to keep distant from an affected individual as much as possible. Hand hygiene should be performed frequently, preferably using soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub. Wear a surgical mask when in the same room with the affected individual and dispose of the mask immediately after use. Hand hygiene should also be performed following removal of the mask. Eye protection is also recommended.