



Indiana State Department of Health

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

Disease Basics

Q: What is 2019 novel coronavirus?

A: 2019 novel (new) coronavirus, or 2019-nCoV, is a new respiratory virus first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China. [Learn about 2019 Novel Coronavirus.](#)

Q: Why is COVID-19 such a big deal? Isn't this like the flu?

A: A novel coronavirus is a new coronavirus that has not been previously identified. The virus causing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), is not the same as the coronaviruses that commonly circulate among humans and cause mild illness, like the common cold.

Early information out of China, where COVID-19 first started, shows that some people are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness, including older adults and people who have serious chronic medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and lung disease.

This risk to specific populations means that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) are asking individuals to practice everyday precautions to protect high-risk individuals. This includes staying home when sick, practicing effective handwashing, disinfecting common areas often and avoiding large gatherings.

Q: Are there cases in Indiana?

A. Yes. Indiana is updating the number of positive cases daily at noon at [coronavirus.IN.gov](https://www.in.gov/coronavirus/).

When can I be released from isolation and go back to work?

The current advice is at least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications **and** improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); **and**, at least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

CDC link here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-in-home-patients.html>

Q. Where can I call if I have questions or if coronavirus infection is suspected?

A. Please visit the ISDH website at [coronavirus.IN.gov](https://www.in.gov/coronavirus/) for general information. Healthcare providers and members of the public who haven't found what they need can also call the ISDH call center at **877-826-0011**.

Q: How does the virus spread?

A: This virus probably originally emerged from an animal source but is now spreading from person-to-person. The CDC advises that people practice social distancing by staying at least 6 feet (two arms' length) from other people, washing your hands often and wearing a face covering when they go out in public, clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, and maintaining a 6-foot distance from others.

Q: Is 2019-nCoV the same as the MERS-CoV or SARS virus?

A: No. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses, some causing illness in people and others that circulate among animals, including camels, cats and bats. The recently emerged 2019-nCoV is not the same as the coronavirus that causes Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) or the coronavirus that causes Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). However, genetic analyses suggest this virus emerged from a virus related to SARS. There are ongoing investigations to learn more. This is a rapidly evolving situation and information will be updated as it becomes available.

Q: How long can the virus survive on surfaces?

A: Current evidence suggests that novel coronavirus may remain viable for hours to days on surfaces made from a variety of materials. Cleaning of visibly dirty surfaces followed by disinfection is a best practice measure for prevention of COVID-19 and other viral respiratory illnesses in households and community settings.” Here’s a good link for more information on home disinfecting:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/home/cleaning-disinfection.html>.

Q: What is the normal course of the illness?

A: The infection is different for everyone, ranging from mild illness to severe respiratory illness. A majority of individuals with COVID-19 have mild symptoms and should monitor them and contact their healthcare provider if symptoms worsen, especially wheezing or shortness of breath. Individuals who do not need to be hospitalized can self-isolate at home. Those who need medical care should call ahead to alert their healthcare provider so that proper infection control measures can be taken.

Prevention

Q: How can I help protect myself?

A: The best way to protect yourself is to heed the current guidance about social distancing and take the same steps used to prevent other respiratory infections, including the flu:

A: The best way to protect yourself includes:

Cleaning your hands often

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

Avoiding close contact

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Put distance between yourself and other people if COVID-19 is spreading in your community. This is especially important for people who are at higher risk of getting very sick.

Cleaning and disinfecting

- Clean AND disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks.
- If surfaces are dirty, clean them: Use detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
- Products with [EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens](#) claims are expected to be effective against COVID-19 based on data for harder to kill viruses. Follow the manufacturer’s

instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.).

Q: I want to know who is currently sick with COVID-19, and where these individuals are located, so that I can protect myself and my loved ones.

A: The ISDH provides a map that shows counties with positive cases of COVID-19. This map is updated daily at 10 a.m. and can be found at [coronavirus.IN.gov](https://www.coronavirus.IN.gov). ISDH cannot release information about specific patients due to privacy laws.

Q: What is the best way to decontaminate an area that has been exposed to COVID-19? What cleaning agents should be used?

A: Products with [EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens](#) claims are expected to be effective against COVID-19 based on data for harder to kill viruses. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.).

Q: I believe that my food been exposed to COVID-19. Does it need to be thrown out?

A: Coronaviruses are generally thought to be spread from person-to-person through respiratory droplets. Currently there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 associated with food. Before preparing or eating food, it is important to always wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds for general food safety. Throughout the day wash your hands after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing, or going to the bathroom.

It may be possible that a person can 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, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

In general, because of poor survivability of these coronaviruses on surfaces, there is likely very low risk of spread from food products or packaging that are shipped over a period of days or weeks at ambient, refrigerated, or frozen temperatures.

More information is available from the CDC [here](#).

Q: My job includes traveling to individual homes. Should I continue working?

A: Employees who are concerned about their health or the health of their clients should discuss these concerns with their employer. More [guidance for business and employers](#) is available on the CDC website.

Q: I'm an employer. I'm concerned that one of my employees may have COVID-19. What should I do?

A: If an employer believes that one of their employees are ill, the employer should recommend that the employee reach out to their primary care physician. If possible, businesses should work with employees who are ill or have had contact with COVID-19 to allow them to work from home.

If an employee is diagnosed with COVID-19, an ISDH team or local health department will work with the employer to determine next steps, which can include quarantine for exposed individuals.

More [guidance for business and employers](#) is available on the CDC website.

Q: What should I do if I had close contact with someone who has 2019-nCoV?

A: There is information for [people who have had close contact](#) with a person confirmed to have, or being evaluated for, 2019-nCoV infection available online.

Q: What is the plan for schools reopening?

A: On June 5, the Indiana Department of Education released its Indiana’s Considerations for Learning and Safe Schools ([IN-CLASS](#)) COVID-19 Health and Safety Re-entry Guidance. This guidance was developed to help Indiana schools open in the COVID-19 environment.

The guidance intentionally did not mandate one standard for schools across the state, allowing for school districts to put mitigation measures in place according to the needs of their individual communities in consultation with the local health department.

More information is available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines for [schools](#), and ISDH has also created additional back-to-school [tools](#).

Q: What should I do if I believe my child has been exposed to COVID-19?

A: Most children experience mild symptoms from COVID-19. Symptoms tend to appear 2-14 days after exposure. If you believe your child may have been exposed, monitor for symptoms and follow the CDC’s latest guidance for staying home. Contact a healthcare provider if symptoms worsen, including fever, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea.

Q: I have a doctor/dentist appointment. Is it safe to keep that appointment?

A: The Indiana Dental Association [reassures](#) patients that dentists are taking steps to follow all established guidelines to protect staff and patients in our offices. Individuals who are concerned about visiting their doctor or dentist, or who are exhibiting symptoms of illness, should call ahead and discuss their concerns with the office. Individuals who believe they have symptoms of COVID-19 should call their healthcare provider first to get instructions so that appropriate infection-control measures can be implemented.

Q: I’m going on vacation to an area with COVID-19 cases. What do I need to do when I get back?

A: Travel guidance changes frequently as the pandemic continues. Specific information for travelers within the United States and internationally is available [on the CDC website](#).

Q: I’ve been told to self-isolate. What does that mean?

A: *(Individuals who are not showing symptoms)* Household members, intimate partners, and caregivers in a nonhealthcare setting may have close contact with a person with symptomatic, laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 or a person under investigation. Close contacts should monitor their health; they should call their healthcare provider right away if they develop symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 (e.g., fever, cough, shortness of breath).

Perform hand hygiene frequently. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry. Soap and water should be used preferentially if hands are visibly dirty.

Surfaces that are touched often should be cleaned daily, and laundry should be washed thoroughly.

If there is a patient in the home, remain separated as much as possible. Other household members should care for any children or pets in the home. See Preventing the Spread for more information.

(Individuals who are mildly ill) People who are mildly ill with COVID-19 can isolate at home during their illness. You should restrict activities outside your home, except for getting medical care. Do not go to work, school, or public areas. Avoid using public transportation, ridesharing, or taxis.

As much as possible, you should stay in a specific room and away from other people in your home. Also, you should use a separate bathroom, if available. You should not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people or pets in your home. After using these items, they should be washed thoroughly with soap and water. Surfaces that are touched often should be cleaned daily.

You should restrict contact with pets and other animals while you are sick with COVID-19, just like you would around other people. Although there have not been reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19, it is still recommended that people sick with COVID-19 limit contact with animals until more information is known about the virus. When possible, have another member of your household care for your animals while you are sick. See [COVID-19 and Animals](#) for more information.

Seek prompt medical attention if your illness is worsening (e.g., trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion, inability to wake or stay awake and bluish lips or face). Before seeking care, call your healthcare provider and tell them that you have, or are being evaluated for, COVID-19. Put on a facemask before you enter the facility. These steps will help the healthcare provider's office to keep other people in the office or waiting room from getting infected or exposed. Ask your healthcare provider to call the local or state health department.

If you have a medical emergency and need to call 911, notify the dispatch personnel that you have, or are being evaluated for COVID-19. If possible, put on a facemask before emergency medical services arrive. See [Preventing the Spread](#) for more information. See [when it's OK to interact with other people again](#). More information on quarantine and self-isolation is available [here](#), information on what do you do if you're sick can be found [here](#).

Medical Information

Q: What are the symptoms and complications that 2019-nCoV can cause?

A: Current symptoms reported for patients with 2019-nCoV have included mild to severe respiratory illness with fever¹, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea. Read about [2019-nCoV Symptoms](#).

Q: Should I be tested for 2019-nCoV?

A: Anyone can be tested at one of the ISDH/Optum test sites. It's particularly important to get tested if you develop a fever¹ and symptoms of respiratory illness — including fever, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea — traveled to an area where COVID-19 cases are increasing, or if you are a close contact of someone who has COVID-19. You should call ahead to a healthcare professional and mention your recent travel or close contact. If you have had close contact² with someone showing these symptoms who has recently traveled from this area, you should call ahead to a healthcare professional and mention your close contact and recent travel.

Q: How do you test a person for 2019-nCoV?

A: The ISDH laboratory is testing high-risk individuals for COVID-19. These include people who have severe respiratory illness and healthcare workers. Private laboratories such as LabCorp also are providing testing, and new testing options continue to become available. All tests done through the ISDH laboratory must be authorized by ISDH prior to submission. Healthcare providers are urged to use their best clinical judgment in determining who requires testing.

For more information on specimen collection see [CDC Information for Laboratories](#).

Q: I want to be tested for COVID-19. How do I get a test completed?

A: Free testing is available for anyone who lives or works in Indiana regardless of symptoms. Testing is also available at other retail and healthcare provider locations throughout the state. Visit the ISDH [website](#) for a map of testing sites and information about how to get a test by location near you.

Q: I've been told that I'm not allowed to enter a specific area without a negative test. How do I get a test completed?

A: There have been reports through the call center that some restrictions are being imposed on individuals unless a negative test report can be presented. Free testing is available for anyone who lives or works in Indiana regardless of symptoms. Testing is also available at other retail and healthcare provider locations throughout the state. Visit the ISDH [website](#) for a map of testing sites and information about how to get a test by location near you

Q: How long does it take to get results from a COVID-19 test?

A: Results are typically available within 72 hours, but the time can vary by lab.

Q: What should healthcare professionals and health departments do?

A: For recommendations and guidance on patients under investigation; infection control, including personal protective equipment guidance; home care and isolation; and case investigation, see [Information for Healthcare Professionals](#). For information on specimen collection and shipment, see [Information for Laboratories](#).

Q: I'm sick and think I might have COVID-19. Where do I go to be seen?

A: If you develop symptoms including fever, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea, and have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19 or have recently traveled from an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19, stay home and call your healthcare provider.

If you suspected you have COVID-19, please call the healthcare provider in advance so that proper precautions can be taken to limit further transmission. Older patients and individuals who have severe underlying medical conditions or are immunocompromised should contact their healthcare provider early, even if their illness is mild.

If you have severe symptoms, such as trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion, inability to wake or stay awake and bluish lips or face, contact your healthcare provider or emergency room and seek care immediately, but please call in advance if possible.

Your doctor will determine if you have signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and whether you should be tested. You can also visit one of ISDH's Optum sites for free COVID-19 testing. Click [here](#) for a map locations and additional information.

Q: My provider is refusing to see me. What do I do now?

A: If your healthcare provider is unavailable, please call the ISDH Call Center at 877-826-0011. Call 911 if you experience symptoms such as trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion, inability to wake or stay awake and bluish lips or face.

Public Health Response and Current Situation

Q: What is CDC doing about COVID-19?

A: This is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation and the CDC is updating information regularly. Visit the CDC's website at cdc.gov/coronavirus. ISDH also has created a dedicated website with resources at coronavirus.IN.gov.

Q: Am I at risk for COVID-19 infection in the United States?

A: There is no vaccine for COVID-19 and no one is immune, so everyone is encouraged to follow the guidelines for social distancing, washing their hands and wearing a face covering in public to slow the spread of illness.

Q: How many people in the United States gotten infected?

A: The first infection with 2019-nCoV in the United States was reported on Jan. 21, 2020. See the [current U.S. case count of infection with 2019-nCoV](#).

Q: How is the state ensuring that COVID-19 individuals are observing the quarantine?

A: Individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 or have been exposed are asked to quarantine for 14 days. The Indiana State Department of Health is contacting each case and checking in on their symptoms. Guidance about quarantine, including legal authority to order quarantine, can be found [here](#) under IC 16-41-9-1.5.

Q: Am I at risk for novel coronavirus from a package or products shipping from China?

A: While much is still being learned about the virus that causes COVID-19, it is believed to live on surfaces for just hours to days. Because of poor survivability of these coronaviruses on surfaces, there is likely very low risk of spread from products or packaging that are shipped over a period of days or weeks at ambient temperatures.

Q: What is the state telling hospitals and care facilities regarding visitors?

A: Hospitals are encouraged to provide updates about changes to policies regarding appointments, providing non-urgent patient care by telephone, and visitors. Consider using your facility's website or social media pages to share updates. See [guidance](#) from the Indiana Hospital Association.

Healthcare providers are also encouraged to screen patients and visitors for symptoms of acute respiratory illness (e.g., fever, cough, difficulty breathing) before entering the facility. Facilities can keep up to date on the recommendations for preventing spread of COVID-19 on [CDC's website](#). You can find information on long-term care facilities in Indiana at coronavirus.in.gov/longtermcare and data on long-term care facilities is posted every Monday on the ISDH [dashboard](#).

(Care facilities) Given their congregate nature and residents served (e.g., older adults often with underlying chronic medical conditions), nursing home populations are at the highest risk of being affected by COVID-19. Some facilities may allow outdoor [visitation](#) or essential family [caregivers](#). FAQs on outdoor visitation at long-term care centers is posted [here](#).

Q: Will my insurance pay for a COVID-19 test? If it won't, or I don't have insurance, will the state pay for it?

A: Individuals should reach out to their insurance provider regarding coverage questions. Testing at an ISDH Optum and drive-thru sites is free to anyone who lives or works in Indiana. Click [here](#) for a map of locations and other information.

Travel

Q: Is it safe to travel to a country where 2019-nCoV cases have occurred?

A: The situation is evolving. Stay up to date with the CDC's latest [travel](#) guidance. Some states may also have implemented their own travel restrictions.

Q: What if I recently traveled to an area experiencing transmission of COVID-19 and got sick?

A: If you traveled to an area impacted by COVID-19 and feel sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing within 14 days after you left, you should:

- Contact a healthcare provider and inform the provider of your recent travel to an area impacted by COVID-19.
- If your symptoms worsen, call ahead before going to a doctor's office or emergency room and tell them about your symptoms and recent travel.
- Avoid contact with others.
- Avoid traveling while sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds to avoid spreading the virus to others. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, if soap and water are not available.

2019-nCoV and Animals

Q: Should I be concerned about pets or other animals and 2019-nCoV?

A: While this virus seems to have emerged from an animal source, it is now spreading from person-to-person. There is no reason to think that any animals or pets in the United States might be a source of infection with this new coronavirus, but individuals who are symptomatic or who have tested positive for COVID-19 are urged to avoid contact with pets.

Q: Should I avoid contact with pets or other animals if I am sick?

A: Do not handle pets or other animals while sick. Although there have not been reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with 2019-nCoV, several types of coronaviruses can cause illness in animals and spread between animals and people. Until we know more, avoid contact with animals and wear a facemask if you must be around animals or care for a pet.

Q. How does COVID-19 affect people who use tobacco products?

Researchers and medical professionals are saying it is reasonable to assume that smoking, and possibly vaping, could increase the risk of developing serious adverse effects from the COVID-19.

In general, long-term smokers and e-cigarette users are at a heightened risk of developing chronic lung conditions. The CDC has said that those with serious underlying medical conditions, such as lung disease, heart disease and diabetes, may be at a higher risk from COVID-19.

Smoking and vaping have been shown to affect the lungs and the immune system, which strongly suggests that using these products increases the risk of infection and worse outcomes from COVID-19.

Experts are warning, based on current research, that people with compromised health due to smoking or vaping and people with opioid, methamphetamine, cannabis, and other substance use disorders could find themselves at increased risk of COVID-19 and its more serious complications.

With the global outbreak of COVID-19, now is the best time to quit tobacco use in order to keep your body resilient against disease. There are free resources available that Hoosiers can use in the comfort of their own home, including the Indiana Tobacco Quitline. Those who are ready to quit can call 1-800-Quit-Now for phone counseling, or by visiting QuitNowIndiana.com for more information.

Young people interested in quitting vaping can text 'Indiana' to 88709 to enroll in the This Is Quitting text messaging program.

[CDC FAQs](#)

Footnotes

¹Fever may not be present in some patients, such as those who are very young, elderly, immunosuppressed, or taking certain fever-lowering medications. Clinical judgment should be used to guide testing of patients in such situations.

²Close contact is defined as—

Someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes starting from 2 days before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic patients, 2 days prior to specimen collection) until the time the patient is isolated. Data are limited to precisely define the “prolonged exposure” to determine “close contact”, however 15 minutes of close exposure can be used as an operational definition for contact investigation. Factors to consider when defining close contact include proximity, the duration of exposure (e.g., longer exposure time likely increases exposure risk), whether the individual has symptoms (e.g., coughing likely increases exposure risk) and whether either the case patient or contact were wearing an N95 respirator (which can efficiently block respiratory secretions from contaminating others and the environment). At this time, differential determination of close contact for those using fabric face coverings is not recommended.

In healthcare settings, it is reasonable to define a prolonged exposure as any exposure greater than 15 minutes because the contact is someone who is ill. Brief interactions are less likely to result in transmission; however, symptoms and the type of interaction (e.g., did the person cough directly into the face of the individual) remain important: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/public-health-recommendations.htm. See CDC's [Interim Healthcare Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Patients Under Investigation for 2019 Novel Coronavirus](#).