Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)
Frequently Asked Questions

Updated March 10, 2020

Under Governor Larry Hogan's direction, state agencies continue to develop comprehensive and coordinated prevention and response plans for coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) will communicate directly with the public, providing updates as this situation develops and accurate information about how to protect yourself and your family.

What is COVID-19?
COVID-19 is a disease caused by a respiratory virus first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in December 2019. COVID-19 a new virus that hasn't caused illness in humans before. Worldwide, COVID-19 has resulted in thousands of human infections, causing illness and in some cases death. Cases have spread to countries throughout the world, with more cases reported daily.

Has COVID-19 spread to the U.S.?
COVID-19 has spread to the United States and has caused some people to become ill, and in severe cases, deaths.

While most of the confirmed cases have been from people who have traveled internationally to countries with a lot of cases of COVID-19, there has been some community spread reported in the U.S. "Community spread" means people have been infected with the virus in an area, including some who are not sure how or where they became infected.

What is the risk to the public right now?
It is likely that at some point, widespread transmission of COVID-19 in the United States will occur. Experts expect that the coming weeks and months, we can expect to see more cases in the U.S. and worldwide.

Community spread is how the common cold and flu are transmitted — meaning people catch it from each other while going about their daily lives. Reported community spread of COVID-19 in

parts of the U.S. raises the level of concern about the immediate threat for the affected communities.

Does anyone in Maryland have this new virus now?
Yes, Maryland currently has confirmed cases of COVID-19.

On March 5, Gov. Hogan declared a state of emergency to further mobilize all available state resources. The declaration officially authorized and directed the MDH and the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) to ramp up coordination among all state and local agencies. The declaration also enables MDH and MEMA to fast-track coordination with our state and local health departments and emergency management teams.

Up-to-date information about testing and case counts in Maryland are available at health.maryland.gov/coronavirus. The page is updated daily.

Who is at risk right now?
Currently, people are at risk who:
- Recently traveled to geographic areas of concern
- Have close, personal contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19
- Care for people with COVID-19

How does COVID-19 spread?
COVID-19 is thought to be able to spread like the cold or flu through:
- coughing and sneezing, which creates respiratory droplets
- close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
- touching an object or surface with the virus on it

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?
- Fever
- Coughing
- Shortness of breath
- In more severe cases, pneumonia (infection in the lungs)

What should I do if I think I am sick with COVID-19?
If you have recently traveled to any geographic area of concern or were in contact with someone with COVID-19, and you become sick with fever, cough or have difficulty breathing, seek medical care right away. Follow these steps:
- Call your doctor or emergency room before you go
- Tell them about recent travel and close contacts (such as people in your household)
- Wear a mask, if one is available

If someone has COVID-19, what will happen to them?
The vast majority of people recover from this infection. Most people will have mild or moderate

symptoms. Some people may be advised to recover at home and isolate themselves from others. These individuals should call their physicians or health care practitioners if their symptoms get worse.

Some COVID-19 infections can lead to serious illness, and in some cases death. If someone has a more serious illness from COVID-19, they may be admitted to the hospital. Older people and those with pre-existing medical conditions have a greater risk for serious illness. Examples of pre-existing medical conditions are: cancer, diabetes, heart disease or other conditions impacting the immune system's ability to fight germs.

Should I cancel plans to travel abroad?
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is updating travel advisories as warranted. CDC has advised against nonessential travel to some geographic areas of concern. Those with underlying health conditions are advised to avoid nonessential travel to certain areas as well.

Visit the CDC travel advisory site to check on current travel warnings if you are planning a trip abroad: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html.

Should I wear a face mask when I go out in public?

No. Face masks are not recommended for the general public, though masks can be useful in some settings — such as in a hospital or clinic waiting room — to prevent someone who has a respiratory illness from spreading it to others.

The CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19. You should only wear a facemask if a healthcare professional recommends it. A facemask should be used by people who have COVID-19 and are showing symptoms. This is to protect others from the risk of getting infected. The use of facemasks is also crucial for health workers and other people who are taking care of someone infected with COVID-19 in close settings (at home or in a health care facility).

What can I do to protect myself and others?
Take everyday preventive steps that are always recommended to slow the spread of respiratory illnesses like colds and flu:

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol if soap and water are not available
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, your sleeve or your elbow
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using standard cleaning practices
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- If you are sick, stay home, except when seeking medical care

Is there a vaccine or medicine I can get for COVID-19?
Not yet, because COVID-19 is a new disease. However, many experts are at work developing one. As with any new vaccine, it must be tested to make certain it is safe and effective. It may take more than a year for a COVID-19 vaccine to become readily available.

There is also no specific medicine currently available to cure COVID-19. However, people who have COVID-19 should seek medical care to help lessen the severity of their symptoms.

How can I be more prepared for COVID-19?
- Have an adequate supply of nonprescriptive drugs and other health supplies on hand, including pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough and cold medicines
- Check your regular prescription drugs to make sure you have an adequate supply; refill your prescriptions if needed
- Have a thermometer, tissues and hand sanitizer in case you become ill and must stay at home to recover
- Talk with family members and loved ones about how they would be cared for if they got sick and what will be needed to care for them at home
- Have a two-week supply of water and food available at home

Is there anything else I should know?
- Do not stigmatize people of any specific ethnicities or racial background. Viruses do not target people from specific populations, ethnicities or racial backgrounds.

- Stay informed and seek information from reliable, official sources. Be wary of myths, rumors and misinformation circulating online and elsewhere. Health information shared through social media is frequently inaccurate, unless coming from an official, reliable source such as the CDC, MDH or local health departments.

Are there additional resources available for specific groups, such as businesses?
The CDC provides current information about COVID-19 at cdc.gov.

Businesses
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-business-response.html

Pregnant Women, those who are breastfeeding, and children
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/pregnant-women.html

Schools
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-schools.html

Travelers
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/faqs.html

Weekly Updates

To receive the weekly email about COVID-19, enter your email address and type "COVID-19" in the search box at this URL:

https://tools.cdc.gov/campaignproxyservice/subscriptions.aspx?topic_id=USCDC_2067