

INTRODUCTION TO COVID-19

What is COVID-19 (Coronavirus)?

COVID-19, previously called novel coronavirus disease or 2019 nCoV, is the viral disease that has caused global concern. Starting out as an outbreak, it has negatively impacted world trade and economies, limited global travel and tourism, forced the lockdown of cities, and is now the latest pandemic after the 2009 H1N1 that originated in the USA.

How Did COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Come About?

Officially named COVID-19 by the World Health Organization (WHO) on February 11, 2020, the respiratory disease is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus that was first detected in Central China's city of Wuhan on December 8, 2019. COVID-19 has then spread to more than a hundred countries with over a hundred thousand confirmed cases. The global mortality rate of COVID-19 is 3.5% as of writing.

COVID-19 (Coronavirus) vs Influenza (flu): What is the Difference?

The flu and COVID-19 are both respiratory diseases with similar symptoms, but they are caused by two different viruses. Here are some similarities and differences between COVID-19 and the flu.

Similarities

Symptoms are the same: cough, body aches, fatigue, high body temperature, shortness of breath, and, in some cases, diarrhea.

Just like the flu, COVID-19's virus can survive in both hot and humid weather as well as in cold and dry climates.

Both can be transmitted by direct contact, droplets, and materials that can carry infection such as clothes, utensils, and furniture.

Severe cases can lead to pneumonia and even death.

Differences

The flu can be prevented by taking a flu vaccine that is readily available every year.

COVID-19 does not have a vaccine but clinical trials are ongoing. It may take a while for a COVID-19 vaccine to be considered safe for medical use.

Efforts to control the spread of COVID-19 includes frequent hand washing, quarantine, and travel ban (Italy implemented a nationwide travel ban).

In the absence of a medically approved vaccine for COVID-19, **people are advised to follow precautionary measures to avoid getting infected and mitigate the further spread of the disease.**

How can individuals and households **prevent the spread of COVID-19 (Coronavirus)?**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides some [recommendations for individuals and families](#).

Prepare

- Be alert for any update from public health officials regarding COVID-19 in your community.
- Consider household members who are at greater risk such as older adults and those with severe chronic illnesses and take actions to reduce the risk of getting infected.
- Update your emergency contact list that includes household members, community resources, and healthcare providers.
- Follow preventive measures such as frequent proper washing of hands, disinfection of frequently touched objects, and avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Prepare a room that can be used for isolation in case a household member gets sick.

Act (in case of an outbreak)

- The CDC recommends seeking immediate medical attention if you develop these emergency warning signs for COVID-19. However, this list is not all-inclusive. Please consult your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning.
 - Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
 - Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
 - New confusion or inability to arouse
 - Bluish lips or face
- Practice social distancing or maintaining distance from people as much as possible (6 feet).
- Stay away from others who are currently ill.
- For older adults and those with severe chronic illnesses:
 - Stay at home and away from crowds as much as possible.
 - Have several weeks' worth of medication and supplies if staying at home.
 - Observe good hand hygiene.

How Can Businesses Protect Employees From COVID-19?

The spread of COVID-19 has impacted businesses and industries worldwide, and it is best for employers to determine ways to prevent COVID-19 from becoming an occupational hazard. Businesses and organizations can practice the following to mitigate risks in the workplace:

- Observe proper information dissemination in the workplace and cascade guidelines that employees can follow regarding COVID-19.
- Read and understand the CDC's recommendation for employers:
 - Employees should be informed and encouraged to stay at home when they're not feeling well.
 - Employees who are sick or become sick while in the workplace should be separated from other employees and sent home.
 - Educate employees on proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
 - Environmental cleaning should be routine. Frequently touched surfaces should always be cleaned.
 - Employees who travel are encouraged to check out travel advisories from the CDC website and follow the recommendation for each country.
 - Employers should have a risk assessment conducted in the workplace to determine the level of risk of infection and come up with corresponding mitigation.