**Rhode Island Department of Health**
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# What you need to know about 2019 Novel Coronavirus

# Questions & Answers in American Sign Language

February 27, 2020

### What is a coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses found in both animals and humans. Some infect people and are known to cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

The CDC (US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) and WHO (World Health Organization) are closely monitoring the cases of this infection for this reason.

### What is a "novel" coronavirus?

A "novel" coronavirus is a new strain of coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans. On February 11, 2020, the World Health Organization announced an official name for the disease that is causing the current outbreak of coronavirus disease, coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Coronavirus disease 2019 is a new virus that causes respiratory illness in people and can spread from person to person. The virus was first identified during an outbreak in Wuhan, China in December 2019.

**How does this coronavirus spread?**

The new coronavirus spreads primarily through contact with an infected person through respiratory droplets generated when a person, for example, coughs or sneezes, or through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose. It is important that everyone practice good respiratory hygiene. For example, sneeze or cough into your elbow, or use a tissue and discard it immediately into a closed bin.  It is also very important for people to wash their hands regularly with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

While the new coronavirus can be transmitted from person to person, in the United States, person-to-person spread has been limited.

**How dangerous is the coronavirus disease 2019?**

As with other respiratory illnesses, infection with coronavirus disease 2019 can cause mild symptoms including a runny nose, sore throat, cough, and fever.  It can be more severe for some persons and can lead to breathing difficulties and pneumonia.

More rarely, the disease can be fatal. Older people, and people with pre-existing medical conditions (such as diabetes and heart disease), appear to be more vulnerable to becoming severely ill with the virus.

**What are the symptoms of COVID-19?**

Symptoms can include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

CDC believes at this time that symptoms of COVID-19 may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure. This is based on what has been seen previously as the incubation period of the MERS virus.

**Are there 2019 novel coronavirus cases in Rhode Island?**
There have been **0 cases** of this novel coronavirus identified in Rhode Island as of Feb. 27, 2020.

**Is there a treatment?**
As of February 27, 2020, there is currently **no vaccine available to prevent COVID-19 infection**.

Some specific treatments are under investigation and will be tested through clinical trials.

**How can I prevent respiratory viruses, including Coronavirus?**
The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to this virus.

There are simple everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses.

These include:

1. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
2. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
3. Stay home when you are sick.
4. Cover your cough or sneeze with your elbow or a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
5. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
6. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
   a. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
7. Follow CDC's recommendations for using a facemask.

a. <u>CDC does **not** recommend that people who are well (not sick) to wear a facemask</u> to protect themselves from respiratory viruses like COVID-19.
b. <u>Facemasks should be used by people who show COVID-19 symptoms</u>, in order to protect others from the risk of getting infected.

People who think they may have been exposed to the virus <u>should contact their healthcare provider immediately to receive appropriate care</u>.

## Can I catch COVID-19 from my pet?
**No**, at present there is no evidence that companion animals or pets such as cats and dogs have been infected or have spread this virus.

## Is it safe to receive a package from China or any other place where the virus has been identified?
**Yes, it is safe**.  People receiving packages are not at risk of contracting the new coronavirus. From experience with other coronaviruses, we know that these types of viruses don't survive long on objects, such as letters or packages.

For more information and updates, visit these websites.

RI Department of Health
www.health.ri.gov/covid

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Federal Government)
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html

World Health Organization
https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019

Source:  World Health Organization