About Coronavirus (COVID-19)
for patients and families

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is an infection caused by a specific virus called SARS-CoV-2 discovered at the end of 2019 as the cause of a cluster of pneumonia cases in Wuhan, China. It is spread mainly when a person with the infection coughs or sneezes and these droplets are transmitted to another person's mouth, nose or eyes. Someone can also become infected by touching an infected surface and then touch their eyes, nose or mouth. **Anyone at any age** can be infected, although adults of middle age and older are most commonly affected.

What COVID-19 symptoms should I look for and what should I do if I have them?

The symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, cough, shortness of breath, loss of smell or taste, body aches, fatigue, chills with or without shaking, a runny nose, nasal/sinus congestion, a sore throat, headaches or gastrointestinal issues such as diarrhea, nausea or vomiting.

If you are concerned you have been exposed to COVID-19 or are having symptoms, please call your primary care provider to get instructions about how to get tested and follow these guidelines:

Stay home except to get medical care

As advised by the CDC, we recommend you stay in your home and separate yourself from other people at home to avoid spreading this infection. The elderly or anyone with more serious medical issues may get more severe symptoms. If your symptoms worsen—specifically difficulty breathing, chest pressure or pain, unable to keep fluids down, severe vomiting, diarrhea or weakness—you may need to return to the Emergency Department for evaluation.

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, ride-sharing or taxis. This is for the health and safety of others around you.

Separate yourself from other people and animals in your home

People: You should stay in a specific room and away from other people in your home. Use a separate bathroom, if available.

Animals: Do not handle pets or other animals while sick. For more information on animals/pets, please visit cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#animals

Don't share household items

You should not share dishes, drinking glasses, utensils, towels or bedding with other people in your home. After using these items, wash thoroughly with soap and water.

Wear a facemask

You should wear a facemask, if possible, when you are around other people (e.g., sharing a room or vehicle) or pets and before you enter a healthcare provider's office. If you are not able to wear a facemask (for example, because it causes trouble breathing), then people who live with you should not be in the same room with you, or they should wear a facemask if they enter your room. Continue to keep

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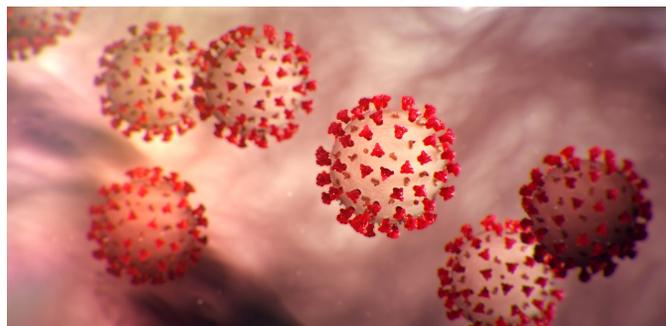
at least 6 feet between yourself and others. The cloth face cover is not a substitute for social distancing.

Clean your hands often

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry. Soap and water should be used if hands are visibly dirty. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Throw used tissues in a lined trash can and immediately wash your hands or use hand sanitizer.

Clean all "high-touch" surfaces every day

High-touch surfaces include counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables. Clean any surfaces that may have blood, stool, or body fluids on them. Use a household cleaning spray or wipe, according to the label instructions.

Monitor your symptoms

Seek prompt medical attention if your illness is worsening (e.g., difficulty breathing).

What should I do if my COVID-19 test is positive?

If you have tested positive for COVID-19, that means you are infected with the virus. You should remain at home, separating yourself from other people in the home for at least 10 days from when you started having symptoms and you have been without a fever for more than 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication. However, if your fever or symptoms last more than 10 days, then you should stay at home, away from other people until after fever is gone and symptoms get better.

If you have tested positive for COVID-19 but have had no symptoms or illness, please isolate at home for 10 days from the date of your first positive COVID-19 test.

What should my household members, intimate contacts and caregivers do if I test positive?

They should stay at home for at least 14 days after the last prolonged exposure to you (greater than 15 minutes over 24 hours and within 6 feet) while you were self-isolating at home.

What happens if I'm so sick I can't manage my care at home?

If you are having an emergency, such as shortness of breath, please go to your nearest Emergency Department. Put on a facemask before you enter the facility. These steps will help keep other people from getting exposed. If you have a medical emergency and need to call 911, notify the dispatch personnel that you have, or may have, COVID-19. If possible, put on a facemask before emergency medical services arrive.

What should I expect from my ER care team?

If you have COVID-19 and need emergency treatment, your care team will wear proper personal protective equipment (PPE). This will include a gown, gloves, mask, and sometimes a special respirator to protect against virus in the air. Your care team may run lab tests and x-rays to learn how severe your illness is. If your illness is severe, you may be admitted to the critical care unit (CCU) and/or may need a breathing tube.

Why do some people with this illness need a breathing tube?

COVID-19 can cause pneumonia which can lead to acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS). Because ARDS causes the lungs to fill with fluid, most patients require a breathing tube (endotracheal tube) to support their breathing. The critical care unit does several tests every day to decide when patients are ready to have the endotracheal tube removed. Once removed, patients may stay in the critical care unit for observation and then may be moved to a medical unit.

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