



## COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions\*

---

### **What is a coronavirus?**

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases, such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV), Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV), and now COVID-19. The viruses are typically zoonotic, meaning they are transmitted between animals and people. Coronaviruses get their name from a distinctive corona, or “crown”, of sugary proteins that appear around the virus under a microscope.

### **What is a *novel* coronavirus?**

A novel coronavirus (nCoV) is a *new* coronavirus that has not been previously identified. The 2019 novel coronavirus is not the same as the coronaviruses that commonly circulate among people and cause mild illnesses like the common cold. A novel virus, even if mild, often has a significant impact on the population because there is no herd immunity in the community for the virus.

### **Do people in Indiana have any of the known coronaviruses?**

Indiana has four common strains of coronaviruses that circulate through our state every year. These are not new or novel, and we are able to test for these through our local laboratories. A diagnosis of coronavirus 229E, NL63, OC43, or HKU1 is NOT the same as a COVID-19 diagnosis. These are very different viruses, and patients will be evaluated and cared for differently.

### **What is the source of COVID-19?**

Public health officials and partners are working very hard to determine the source of COVID-19, but a source has not yet been identified. Historically, coronaviruses have originated in animals such as camels, cats and bats. More research needs to be done on this new strain of virus to definitively determine the source.

### **How does the COVID-19 virus spread?**

The virus likely originated in an animal but now seems to be spreading person-to-person. It is important to note that some viruses are highly contagious, like measles, while others are less so. At this time, researchers are still working on determining how infectious this novel strain of coronavirus is.

Most often, spreading the disease from person-to-person happens among close contacts (within approx. 6 ft). Person-to-person spread is thought to occur mainly via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes, similar to how influenza and other respiratory illnesses are spread. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly inhaled them into the lungs. It is believed a person can become infected with COVID-19 by touching a contaminated surface and then touching their own mouth, nose or

eyes; however the risk is very low. There is much about how this new virus spreads that is still unknown.

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

Current symptoms reported for patients with COVID-19 have included mild to severe respiratory illness with possible fever, cough and difficulty breathing.

### **Can you die from COVID-19?**

Yes, you can die from COVID-19, but the exact mortality rate is not yet know. Researchers believe the mortality rate is between 2-11%. It has been documented to cause more severe disease in the elderly (over age 60) and those with immune compromising conditions such as diabetes, chronic lung disease and heart disease. But we are still learning about the severity of illness associated with this infection.

### **Is there a treatment or vaccine for COVID-19?**

As of now, there is no treatment or vaccine available for COVID-19.

### **Should I be tested for COVID-19?**

If you develop a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness, such as cough or shortness of breath, and you have traveled from an affected country (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>) within the past 14 days, or had contact with someone who is a confirmed case of COVID-19, you should call ahead to a healthcare professional to discuss your care.

If you have not been to an area with known transmission within the past 14 days and have not been around a confirmed case of COVID-19, there is NO reason to be tested for the virus at this time.

### **Is it safe to travel to China or other countries where COVID-19 cases have occurred?**

The situation is constantly evolving, please visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html> for the most up-to-date travel information.

### **What if I recently traveled to China and got sick?**

If you were recently in China and feel sick with fever, cough or difficulty breathing within 14 days of departure you should:

- Seek medical advice – call ahead to your doctor or local health department (in Allen County, the health department can be reached during business hours at 260-449-4838) to tell them about your recent travel and symptoms
- Avoid contact with others
- Not travel while sick
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when coughing or sneezing

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds

### **Is everyone from China being quarantined when they return to the United States?**

The CDC is currently re-routing all direct flights from China to 11 US airports. Passengers are screened at the airport for symptoms of COVID-19. Currently, if a passenger is screened and is positive for symptoms, they are immediately placed in isolation for testing. If a passenger returns from Hubei Province and they are asymptomatic (not experiencing symptoms), they are placed in a mandatory 14-day quarantine where they can be monitored to ensure they do not develop symptoms. If a passenger is traveling from mainland China and is asymptomatic, they are allowed to return home and are asked to stay home for 14 days if possible.

### **Does the CDC recommend the use of facemasks in public to prevent COVID-19?**

No, not at this time. The CDC does not currently recommend the use of facemasks among the general public. While limited person-to-person transmission has been detected, the virus is not currently spreading widely in the community in the United States.

### **What could I be doing now to protect myself?**

It is currently influenza season and there are several respiratory illnesses circulating in our community. Your best protection is to get your flu shot and practice good hand hygiene and cough etiquette. Also follow workplace guidelines and stay home from work at least 24 hours after episodes of fever, vomiting or diarrhea.

### **Am I at risk for COVID-19 from a package or products shipped from China?**

In general, because these coronaviruses don't survive very long 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 ("room") temperatures. Currently there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 associated with imported goods and there have not been any cases in the US associated with imported goods.

### **More people die from the influenza every year, why are we so worried about COVID-19?**

There are several reasons we are concerned about COVID-19. This is a new, novel virus and we are not sure how it is going to affect our community. With influenza, we have years of data and trends to show how it moves throughout a community and who is at greatest risk. We also have several vaccines, treatments and a high level of herd immunity throughout our community. With COVID-19, there is no treatment, no vaccine, and no herd immunity. Until we have more information, we need to take it very seriously.

### **How can I stay up-to-date on the latest information?**

This information is evolving daily. We have found the following websites to be very helpful:

*Adapted from: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) (Coronavirus FAQ's)*

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/COVID-19/index.html>

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

<https://www.in.gov/isdh/28470.htm>