

## Corona Virus (COVID-19) Facts

As of March 8, 2020, The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) has assessed the public health risk associated with COVID-19 as low for Canada. The public health risk is continually reassessed as new information becomes available.

**Coronaviruses** are a large family of viruses that may cause illness in animals or humans. In humans, several coronaviruses are known to cause respiratory infections ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

**COVID-19** is caused by a novel (new) coronavirus “SARS-CoV-2” that was first detected in China in December 2019. To date, it has been found in approximately 90 countries, including Canada. Human coronaviruses are common and are typically associated with mild illnesses, similar to the common cold. Coronavirus typically originates from an infected animal and, in some cases, make the jump over to humans.

**Symptoms** of human coronaviruses may be very mild (including some people with no reported symptoms), or more serious. Information to date suggests the COVID-19 illness is mild. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure and include:

- Fever
- Dry cough
- Shortness of breath
- Fatigue

Some people may experience aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat or diarrhea.

Since the signs and symptoms are similar to influenza (the flu), the only way to know if you have COVID-19 is to get tested.

**People at higher risk** include older adults, typically because immune systems change as we age, making it harder for the body to fight off diseases and infections. Older adults often have other underlying health conditions making it harder to recover from an illness. People who have severe chronic medical conditions like heart, lung or kidney disease may be at higher risk for a more serious COVID-19 illness.

### HOW SERIOUS is COVID-19?

- COVID-19 is *not as deadly* as *other coronaviruses*, including SARS and MERS.
- *80% of patients will have mild symptoms and recover.*
- About 14% of cases will be more severe, including pneumonia and shortness of breath.
- About 5% will experience critical symptoms.
- In approx. 2-3% of cases the virus is fatal, more likely seen in older adults.
- To date, there have been relatively few cases in children.
- It does not transmit as efficiently as influenza.
- As of Mar 5/20, there have been 95,265 cases reported globally; of those, approximately 93,000 will recover.

Source: [www.WHO.int](http://www.WHO.int)

**Putting it in perspective: In the U.S. alone, the flu has caused an estimated 32 million illnesses, 310,000 hospitalizations and 18,000 deaths this season, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**

**There may be an increased risk** to people that have:

- Provided care or have been in close contact with someone who has the virus
- Travelled abroad to an infected area
- Been in contact with a person who has travelled to an infected area
- Worked closely with animals suspected to transmit the disease (bats, pangolins) and/or consumed their meat where it has not been well cooked.



**It's not deadly to most people, but it can kill.**

**The COVID-19 is spread** from person to person through respiratory droplets. When a person sneezes, coughs, or exhales, they produce water droplets from the nose and mouth that contain the virus. The droplets then land on surrounding surfaces. People who touch infected surfaces can transmit the virus to themselves by subsequently touching their mouth, nose and eyes. People can also catch COVID-19 if they breathe in droplets from a person who has coughed or breathed out droplets containing the virus. This is why its important to stay more than 1 metre away from someone that is sick.

- These viruses are not known to spread through ventilation systems or the water.
- How long the virus survives on surfaces is not known. It is thought to be a few hours or up to several days.

**PREVENTION** It should be stressed that the risk of severe COVID-19 infection is **LOW**. The odds of contracting this or any other virus for that matter can be reduced in a number of ways:

1. Practice excellent hygiene frequently:
  - a. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (as long as it takes to sing Happy Birthday to yourself) or use an alcohol-based sanitizer.
  - b. Use the sleeve of your shirt or other material when touching handles and doors in public places.
  - c. Maintain at least 1-2 metres (3-6 feet) distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.
  - d. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth, especially with unwashed hands.
  - e. Avoid shaking hands. Substitute elbow or fist bumps.
  - f. Use good respiratory hygiene
    - i. If you cough or sneeze, cover it your mouth and nose with your sleeve in your bent elbow or use a Kleenex. Dispose of the Kleenex properly and wash your hands.
2. Stay home if you feel unwell. If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention.
3. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
4. Disinfect surfaces regularly.
5. Avoid travel to high-risk places.

**THE BEST PREVENTION OF ALL: BOOST YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM.** Use lifestyle strategies to optimize the health and wellbeing of your body to reduce the chance of becoming host to the virus in the first place. Here are some of the ways that you can boost your immune system:

1. Get restful sleep; at least 7-8 hours every night
2. Reduce and manage stress. Living in stress (fear, anxiety, anger) is the body living in the survival response. In stress, the sympathetic nervous system is engaged, flooding the body with adrenaline and cortisol. Over time constant stress depletes your body's vital life force reserves, weakens the immune system and can down regulate your genes to be more susceptible to illness and disease.
  - a. Undertake activities that engage the parasympathetic nervous system, the state where the body's internal systems are restoring and repairing themselves. Activities include mindfulness, meditation, deep breathing and walking in nature. Remember, you can **literally worry yourself sick** (Source Heart Math Institute)
3. Focus on healthy emotions; be happy! Emotions like love, compassion, joy, empathy and appreciation flood the body with serotonin, endorphins and other happy chemicals that boost the immune system and upregulate genes for wellness and longevity. Everyday, take time to focus on what you are grateful for. (Source: Scientific American. How happiness boosts the immune system)
4. Eat a healthy diet. Ditch the sugars and refined carbohydrates and instead fill your plate with fruits, vegetables, and healthy fats and proteins.
5. Reduce sources of inflammation. Take supplements such as Vitamin C, turmeric, ginger, green tea etc.

If you want to have a healthy immune system, you need to laugh often, view life with a positive eye, and put yourself in a relaxed state of mind on a regular basis.

MICHAEL T. MURRAY, N.D.



**About Face Masks** Since the actual risk of being infected with COVID-19 is currently low, it is not recommended that the general public wear face masks. Only people who have, are suspected of having the virus, or are health care workers, need to be wearing face masks at this time. If you are wearing a facemask for prevention, a simple face mask is not effective as it allows for air and particles to penetrate at the openings. An N95 mask must be worn that is fitted to provide a proper seal to the face.

**Treatment.** There currently is no specific treatment for COVID-19 and a flu vaccine will not protect you. Your best defence is cultivating a healthy immune system.

Some of the anxiety being created by constant news everywhere can be managed and moderated with accurate information. Dispelling rumours and misinformation is a vital part of us collectively overcoming the present challenges faced by COVID-19. We need to ensure people have accurate information and to understand how every person has the capacity to contribute, to protect themselves and others, whether at work, at home or in the community.

**For more information in Canada:**

- 1-833-784-4397
- [canada.ca/coronavirus](https://canada.ca/coronavirus)
- [phac.info.aspc@canada.ca](mailto:phac.info.aspc@canada.ca)

Sources used in this technical update:

- <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>
- <https://www.who.int/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/>