



HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE CORONAVIRUS

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INTRODUCTION

What is a coronavirus?

It is a novel virus named for the crownlike spikes that protrude from its surface. The coronavirus can infect both animals and people and can cause a range of respiratory illnesses from the common cold to lung lesions and pneumonia.

How contagious is the virus?

It seems to spread very easily from person to person, especially in homes, hospitals and other confined spaces. The pathogen can travel through the air, enveloped in tiny respiratory droplets that are produced when a sick person breathes, talks, coughs or sneezes.

Where has the virus spread?

The virus, which originated in Wuhan, China, has sickened more than 89,700 in at least 67 countries and more than 3,000 have died. The spread has slowed in China, but is picking up speed in Europe and the United States.

What symptoms should I look out for?

Symptoms, which can take between two to 14 days to appear, include fever, cough and difficulty breathing or

shortness of breath. Milder cases may resemble the flu or a bad cold, but people may be able to pass on the virus even before they develop symptoms.

Coronavirus cases continued to be confirmed around the world. By following some basic steps, you can help reduce your risk, and do your part to protect others, if your community is affected.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO PREPARE FOR THE CORONAVIRUS

1. Keep your hands clean, and keep your distance from sick people

It's worth repeating, over and over again: wash your hands. Wet your hands with clean running water and then lather them with soap; don't miss the backs of your hands, between your fingers or under your nails. Make sure to scrub for at least 20 seconds and dry them with a clean towel or let them air dry.

Alcohol-based hand sanitizers, which should be rubbed in for about 20 seconds, can also work, but the gel must contain at least 60 percent alcohol.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends you avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands (tough one, we know).

Meanwhile, if someone else is showing flu- or cold-like symptoms, try to stay six feet away. If that's not possible, even a little distancing is helpful, according to experts, as the virus seems to spread through droplets in the air from a cough or sneeze.

Sneezing or coughing yourself? Direct it into your elbow so as to avoid leaving germs on your hands, which can then quickly spread to other surfaces. Other ways to be smart include using the "Ebola handshake," where you greet others with elbow bumps, and pushing elevator buttons with a knuckle instead of a fingertip.

2. Unless you are already infected, face masks won't help you

Face masks have become almost synonymous with the coronavirus outbreak overseas, but they don't do much to protect you — most surgical masks are too loose to prevent inhalation of the virus.

The C.D.C. and infectious disease specialists do not recommend face masks if you're healthy.

But if you're a health care worker or are caring for sick people at home or in a health care facility, you should wear one.

If you're infected, masks can help prevent the spread of a virus. The most effective are the so-called N95 masks, which block 95 percent of very small particles.

3. Stock up on home supplies, medicine and resources

Experts suggest stocking at least a 30-day supply of any needed prescriptions, and you should consider doing the same for household items like food staples, laundry detergent, and diapers, if you have small children.

Remember, alcohol is a good disinfectant for coronaviruses so make sure to keep surfaces in your home clean. Throw out those tissues in a wastebasket after you blow your nose.

The C.D.C. also recommends cleaning "high touch" surfaces, like phones and tablets.

4. Prepare your family, and communicate your plan

Make sure every member of the family is up-to-date on any and all emergency plans.

Be sure to be in communication with your child's school on what types of plans are established for any sort of schedule change, including early dismissals or online instruction. And if you have elderly parents or relatives, or family members with any special health concerns, make sure you have a plan for caring for them if they get sick.

There's also some reassurance that could be had by creating a family emergency checklist, which could answer basic questions about evacuations, resources and supplies — especially if you have any preconditions or illnesses.

5. With your children, keep calm and carry on and get the flu shot

Protect your child by taking the same precautions you would during cold and flu season: encourage frequent hand washing, move away from people who are coughing or sneezing and get the flu shot.

Experts recommend getting the flu vaccine, noting that vaccinating children is the best protection for older people against bacterial pneumonia.

Right now, there's no reason for parents to worry, the experts say, and the good news is that coronavirus cases in children have been very rare.

When talking to your children about an outbreak, make sure you first assess their knowledge of the virus and that you process your own anxiety. It's important that you don't dismiss their fears and speak to them at an age-appropriate level.

So keep calm, and if there's an outbreak in your community, practice what's known as "social distancing," which means more TV bingeing at home and fewer trips to the park.

6. Practice respiratory hygiene

Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately.

Why? Droplets spread virus. By following good respiratory hygiene you protect the people around you from viruses such as cold, flu and COVID-19.

7. If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical care early

Stay home if you feel unwell. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention.

8. About to go on vacation? Consider your destination and how you feel about risk

Experts say that people currently should feel "very comfortable" traveling to destinations in the India, "but that could quickly change."

For travel outside the country, check travel warnings Issued by WHO/CDC. At present avoid all nonessential travel to China, South Korea, Italy, Japan and Iran.

Still, if you are sick, don't travel. Pregnant women and others with compromised immune systems should also think twice about nonessential travel.

Currently a vaccine or drug is not available for COVID-19.

WHY PREPARE FOR CORONAVIRUS?

It's your civic duty to prevent our society

ABBREVIATION

CDC: Centers for Disease Control

WHO: World Health Organization

REFERENCES

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