

8 Answers to Your Coronavirus Questions

The COVID-19 virus (recently known as the novel coronavirus) outbreak has been worsening in recent months, teetering on a full-blown pandemic. The virus has already killed thousands,

with tens of thousands more still infected. While the outbreak has mostly affected China, cases are quickly cropping up around the world, including in the United States.

Here are eight answers to questions you may have about COVID-19 and your health.

1 How can I lower my chances of infection?

There's still much experts don't know about COVID-19, namely how it spreads and how it can be cured. However, health leaders encourage implementing prevention methods used to ward off similar respiratory illnesses, like the flu. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the following:

- ◆ Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- ◆ Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- ◆ Stay home when you are sick.
- ◆ Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- ◆ Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- ◆ Wash your hands often.

2 Should I stock up on supplies?

During these types of health scares, the U.S. Department of Homeland security recommends stocking up on water, food and nonprescription health supplies (e.g., pain relievers, cough medicine and vitamins).

3 Is it safe to travel?

The CDC maintains a list of locations that should be avoided to reduce chances of infection. Currently, the CDC recommends avoiding China completely; not traveling to Iran, Italy and Japan if possible; and practicing usual health precautions if traveling to Hong Kong. See an updated list at cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers.

4 Should my children still attend school?

Sick children should be kept at home as a precaution, but children who aren't sick should continue to follow their school's guidance. The CDC announced that some schools may take precautions, such as extended closures, if the COVID-19 outbreak worsens. Several countries are already implementing or considering such options.

5 Will I be able to see my doctor and receive my normal prescriptions?

You should still be able to continue normal health services, but there may be delays related to an increase in patients. If you're concerned about running out of a prescription or not being able to reach your physician, contact your doctor as soon as possible to discuss your options. Many doctors offer telehealth options for remote patient visits. Your doctor may also be able to help fill a prescription early if you need to stock up.

6 Should I be wearing a face mask?

You should only wear a face mask if your doctor recommends it or if you're exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, according to the CDC.

7 What if a loved one or I become infected?

The CDC says to stay home and avoid public transportation if you think you're infected. Infected patients should be separated from everyone as much as possible, isolating themselves to a single room in a home. Even animals should be avoided, as experts are still learning how the virus can be spread. After quarantining, call your doctor and tell them you suspect a COVID-19 infection. A phone call will help the hospital prepare for a visit by a potentially infected patient. Your doctor will then be able to conduct follow-up tests and prescribe treatment.

8 Where can I learn more?

Check cdc.gov for more information about COVID-19 and what health experts are doing to stop it.