COVID-19 - Coronavirus

Introduction

COVID-19 was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. The disease is caused by a beta coronavirus named SARS-CoV-2.

COVID-19 usually causes mild to moderate respiratory illness. Most cases are mild. Few cases have resulted in severe illness and death. This is mainly among people with weak immune systems and chronic health problems, as well as pregnant women, premature infants and the elderly. COVID-19 has been declared an international public health emergency.

This reference summary explains COVID-19. It discusses its symptoms, treatment options and prevention methods.

Symptoms

COVID-19 usually causes mild to moderate respiratory tract illness. Most cases are mild. In some cases, severe illness or death can result. This happens mainly among people with weak immune systems and chronic health problems, as well as pregnant women, premature infants and the elderly.

Symptoms may include:
- Cough.
- Fever.
- Difficulty breathing.

COVID-19 can spread from person to person.

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COVID-19 can cause respiratory tract illnesses, such as pneumonia. This is more common in people with cardiopulmonary disease or weakened immune systems and in premature infants and the elderly.

Symptoms usually happen about 2 to 14 days after coming in contact with the virus. People with active symptoms of illness are contagious. But it is not known for how long a person may be contagious before or after symptoms appear.

Call your health care provider if you develop symptoms within 14 days of visiting China or other areas where there is an outbreak. If you were exposed to someone who has COVID-19, tell your health care provider. Call ahead before going to the health care facility so they can take steps to keep others safe.

Diagnosis

If you think you have COVID-19, call a health care provider right away. To protect others, call the office before you visit.

Your health care provider will ask about your symptoms, personal and family medical history and any recent travel. He or she will also perform a physical exam. Laboratory tests can help confirm the diagnosis.
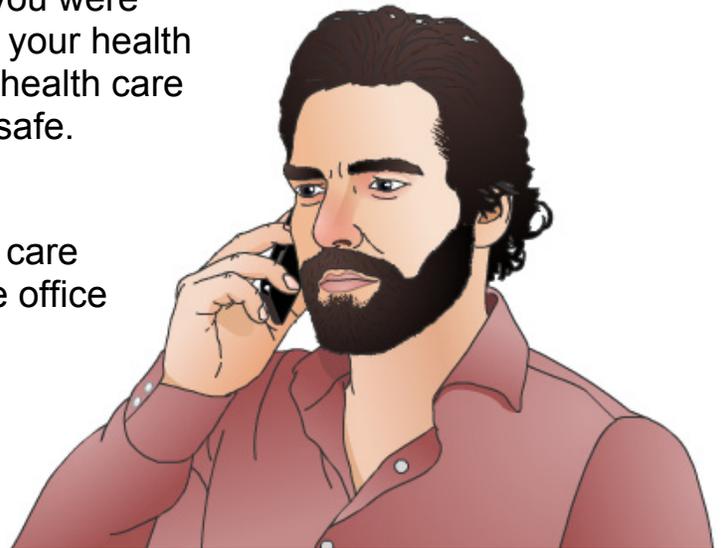
You should wear a mask before entering the health care facility and while you are there. You should also wear the mask whenever you are around other people. Follow any instructions your health care team gives you.

Treatment

There are no specific treatments for COVID-19. Supportive care can help ease symptoms. This may include medications and breathing support for severe cases.

Most people recover on their own. Using a room humidifier or taking a hot shower may help ease coughing.

If you are sick, stay home and rest. You should also drink plenty of fluids. Stay away from other people. To keep others safe, don't leave the house except to visit a health care provider.

Prevention

There are currently no vaccines available to protect against COVID-19. Avoid traveling to or from China or any parts of the world where there has been an outbreak.

If you are sick, you can protect others by:
- Avoiding close contact with people and animals.
- Covering your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze.
- Keeping objects and surfaces clean and disinfected.
- Staying home while you are sick.
- Wearing a mask around others and using a separate bathroom and bedroom if possible.

When you are around people who are sick, you should:
- Avoid close contact with them.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Avoid sharing food, drinks or household items with someone who is sick.
- Wear a mask if the person who is sick is not able to wear one.

Everyone can help prevent the spread of infection by washing their hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

Summary

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There are no specific treatments for or vaccines against COVID-19. Supportive care can help ease symptoms. Most people recover on their own.

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