



## COVID-19 (coronavirus) Information

### **What is a coronavirus? What is COVID-19?**

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that can cause illness in animals and humans. Human coronaviruses commonly circulate in the United States and usually cause mild illnesses like the common cold. [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#) is a disease that was identified in late 2019 and was declared a pandemic on March 11. COVID-19 is an international, national and NC public health emergency.

### **How does it spread and what can I do to prevent it from spreading?**

Coronaviruses, like COVID-19, are most often spread through the air by coughing or sneezing, through close personal contact (including touching and shaking hands) or through touching your nose, mouth or eyes before washing your hands.

To help prevent the spread, the best thing you can do is stay home as much as possible – especially if:

- You are sick with COVID-19
- You think you might have COVID-19 and have mild [symptoms](#)
- You believe you might have COVID-19

You should also follow these [common-sense measures](#) to help protect yourself and others from spreading COVID-19 and other viruses:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds at a time.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are ill.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Do not reuse tissue after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces that are frequently touched.
- Practice social distancing when you can, staying at least 6 feet away from others.

### **Should I wear a mask?**

The CDC does not recommend that people who are healthy wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory viruses. Facemasks should be used by people who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and other respiratory illness like flu to protect others from getting infected. Healthcare providers and others taking care of people with COVID-19 should wear appropriate personal protective equipment.

### **Should I worry about opening packages?**

Currently there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 associated with imported goods and there have not been any cases of COVID-19 in the United States associated with imported goods.

### **Can you get COVID-19 from touching contaminated objects?**

Possibly, if you touch a surface with the virus on it, and then touch your mouth, nose or eyes. However, this is not likely to be the main way the virus spreads.

### **Is a vaccine available?**

Currently there is no vaccine to protect against COVID-19. The best way to protect yourself from respiratory diseases like COVID-19 is to take common-sense precautions. These include frequent hand washing, avoiding touching your face, covering your mouth when you cough or sneeze, making sure you have gotten your annual flu shot and practicing social distancing by staying six feet away from others as much as possible. There is work underway to develop a vaccine.

### **What is community spread?**

Community spread means there is at least one case where we don't know how someone contracted COVID-19. They didn't have contact with someone who has tested positive or traveled to highly impacted area.

## COVID-19 Symptoms

### **What are the symptoms and when do they appear?**

Symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to the flu. They are:

- Cough
- Fever
- Shortness of breath

COVID-19 typically causes mild to moderate respiratory illness. Most people with COVID-19 have mild symptoms that do not require hospitalization, although there have been reports of severe illness with a small percentage resulting in death. Respiratory symptoms alone are not an indicator for COVID-19.

Symptoms may appear two to 14 days after exposure.

### **Can COVID-19 be spread before someone has symptoms?**

We know that people are most contagious when they have symptoms. Whether the virus can be spread before someone has symptoms is currently being evaluated. More on how COVID-19 spreads is available from the CDC.

### **What treatments are available?**

Most people with illnesses due to coronavirus recover on their own. There are no specific treatments for COVID-19, but treatments to bring down fever or alleviate other symptoms may help. For people who become severely ill, hospitals can provide care. There is more to be learned about COVID-19 as the situation continues to evolve, and treatment options may change over time.

## Risks

### **Who is considered a high-risk individual?**

Older adults and people who have severe chronic medical conditions like heart, lung or kidney disease and those with weakened immune systems seem to be at higher risk for more serious COVID-19 illness if they become infected with the virus. Learn more about who may be at higher risk for severe illness.

Additionally, the CDC has more information about at-risk individuals, including older adults, people with asthma, and people with HIV.

### **I had contact with someone who was diagnosed with COVID-19. What should I do?**

If you have had close contact with someone while they were symptomatic, you should monitor yourself for symptoms, stay home to the extent possible and contact your health care provider if you start suffering from severe illness. If you do not have health insurance, call your nearest Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC).

## Pharmaceuticals

### **What is hydroxychloroquine (Plaquenil) and does it treat COVID-19?**

Hydroxychloroquine is FDA approved to treat lupus and rheumatoid arthritis, as well as treat or prevent malaria. So far, studies with small numbers of patients suggest that hydroxychloroquine could reduce the length of hospital stay and improve COVID-19 pneumonia in severely ill patients. We continue to review the evidence as it becomes available. We do not have data at this time to show hydroxychloroquine can prevent coronavirus infection.

### **What other medications being tested to treat COVID-19?**

Many medications are being tested to treat or prevent COVID-19, but no medication is currently approved by the FDA to treat the virus. Many of the medications in testing for COVID-19 are FDA approved to treat serious diseases, such as tuberculosis, HIV infection, and autoimmune conditions. It is important that those medications remain available to treat the conditions for which they are FDA approved as their effectiveness for COVID-19 is being assessed.

## **How can providers and pharmacies help ensure medications remain available for chronic conditions if the medication is in testing for COVID-19?**

As more treatments are investigated for COVID-19 treatments, we encourage prescribers to limit prescriptions to drugs consistent with evidence for their use, and in quantities consistent with such. Many of the drugs in evaluation for COVID-19 are FDA approved for other diseases and vital to ongoing patient therapy. We recommend providers issue prescriptions for medications to treat COVID-19 when warranted based on professional judgment and current evidence, and include on the prescription the diagnosis, limit quantities to no more than 14 days, and permit no refills without a follow-up prescription.

The NC Board of Pharmacy passed the COVID19 Drug Preservation Rule on 3/24/2020. The text of the rule is available here. This rule restricts dispensing to 14 days of certain medications when used for COVID19. This helps maintain supplies for medications for patients using them for chronic conditions and severely ill COVID19 patients. The NC Board of Pharmacy has an FAQ on their website at [www.ncbop.org](http://www.ncbop.org).

## **Are veterinary medications or other products with chloroquine as an active ingredient safe to consume?**

Are veterinary medications or other products with chloroquine as an active ingredient safe to consume?

No. People should not take any medications unless they are FDA approved for human consumption and prescribed by their doctor. There has been a report of a death because a person took a fish care product that contained chloroquine. The Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council issued a statement reminding everyone "that they should never use pet care products, or any products, for any purpose other than what the label directs."

## **Is there a COVID-19 vaccine?**

No. There are trials for a coronavirus vaccine, but a commercially-available vaccine will take many months to over a year to develop.

## **Travel**

### **I have recently traveled. What should I do?**

Travelers returning from areas with widespread community transmission must stay home for 14 days after returning.

See the CDC travel advisories for a list of countries that are currently experiencing widespread community transmission. If you returned from one of these countries, take the following steps to monitor your health and practice social distancing for 14 days after you leave the affected area:

- Take your temperature with a thermometer two times a day and monitor for fever (temperature of 100.4 F or higher). Watch for other symptoms such as cough or shortness of breath.
- Stay home and avoid contact with others. Do not go to work or school during this 14-day period.
- Do not take public transportation, taxis, or ride-shares.
- Avoid crowded places and limit your activities in public.
- Stay 6 feet (about two arm's lengths) away from others.

If you get sick with a fever, cough, and/or shortness of breath after travel to an affected country, seek medical care. Call your doctor before you visit so they can prepare to see you safely.

### **I have a trip planned. Should I still go?**

There are no specific advisories or restrictions for travel within the United States. However, cases of COVID-19 have been reported in many states, and some areas are experiencing community spread of the disease. Crowded travel settings, like airports, may increase your risk of exposure to COVID-19 if there are other travelers with COVID-19.

The CDC and NCDHHS recommend that adults over age 65, people with serious underlying health conditions (such as heart disease, lung disease, or diabetes) and people with weakened immune systems avoid travel at this time if possible and stay home to the extent possible to decrease the chance of infection.

Travel recommendations are frequently changing. Visit the CDC's website and the U.S. Department of State website for the latest travel recommendations and visit our travel guidance for more information.

### **Are there certain things I should do if I decide to travel?**

When traveling, please follow these common-sense recommendations:

- Do not travel if you are sick.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Avoid close contact with people who are ill.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and throw it away. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.
- If you feel well, it is not necessary to wear a facemask. Facemasks are most effective when used by people who are already ill to prevent them from spreading viruses and other germs.

## **Precautions and Preparations**

### **What can I do to protect myself and my family?**

There are common sense measures everyone can take to protect themselves and others from the spread of COVID-19. NCDHHS recommends that people at high risk of severe illness from COVID-19 stay at home to the extent possible to decrease the chance of infection. Everyone should also practice social distancing staying six feet away from others as much as possible.

### **What should older adults do to protect themselves?**

Older adults and people who have severe chronic medical conditions like heart, lung or kidney disease and those with weakened immune systems are at a higher risk for more serious COVID-19 illness. NCDHHS recommends that people at high risk of severe illness from COVID-19 stay at home to the extent possible to decrease the chance of infection. Learn more about what high-risk individuals should do.

### **What can pregnant women do to protect themselves?**

There is limited information so far about COVID-19 in pregnant women. Pregnant women are at higher risk from influenza and other respiratory viruses, so they are encouraged to be extra vigilant. There is no evidence that children are more susceptible to COVID-19. The CDC has information specifically for pregnant women and children.

### **Can I visit a nursing home or elder care facility?**

NCDHHS recommends that all facilities that serve as residential establishments for high-risk persons restrict visitors. This is due to older adults and those with chronic conditions being more likely to have severe illness when infected with COVID-19. These establishments include nursing homes, independent and assisted living facilities, correctional facilities, and facilities that care for medically-vulnerable children.

### **How can my household prepare for an outbreak?**

The CDC recommends households have a plan of action to prepare for a COVID-19 outbreak. People should think about having daily necessities and medications to last about two weeks, in case they need to isolate. Massive stock piling of supplies is not necessary.

Individuals and families should have a plan in case they need to miss work due to illness or need to care for a sick family member.

### **What cleaning products should I use to prevent the spread of COVID-19? What should be cleaned?**

Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces in common areas, such as doorknobs, light switches, remotes, handles, tables, desks, toilets, sinks, hard-back chairs. First, clean dirty surfaces with detergent or soap and water. Disinfect surfaces with diluted household bleach solution (1/3 cup bleach per gallon of water), alcohol solutions of 70%+ alcohol or EPA-registered household disinfectants. Use gloves or wash hands thoroughly after cleaning.

### **How long will COVID-19 remain on surfaces?**

Current evidence suggests that COVID-19 may remain viable for hours to days on surfaces.

## Testing

### **How is COVID-19 diagnosed?**

COVID-19 is diagnosed through a laboratory test. More information about testing in North Carolina is here.

### **Should I get tested?**

If you develop symptoms of COVID-19, you should call to discuss this with your health care provider and your local health department. Testing for COVID-19 can only be done in consultation with your health care provider or local health department

### **Why are we not testing more?**

Supplies have been limited, but testing is targeted to people who are symptomatic. Testing for asymptomatic persons is not recommended. Testing criteria has been expanded.

## Know Your Terms

### **Who is social distancing recommended for? Should we all be social distancing?**

Social distancing or maintaining a minimum distance of 6 feet away from others is recommended at this point for everyone.

### **What is the difference between self-monitoring, isolation and quarantine?**

These are protective measures used to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among people who may have been exposed.

Self-monitoring is for those that may have been exposed to a person with COVID-19, and they should monitor themselves for symptoms. Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. If they develop symptoms (fever, cough and shortness of breath) during the self-monitoring period, they should self-isolate, limit contact with others, and seek advice by telephone from a healthcare provider or their local health department to determine whether medical evaluation is needed.

Quarantine is for people who were exposed to a person with a confirmed case of COVID-19 but are not experiencing symptoms. Contact your local health department if you are unsure if you should self-quarantine.

Isolation separates people who are sick from those who are well. The people who tested presumptive positive and positive in North Carolina are in isolation.

### **How is it decided when a person with COVID-19 can self-isolate at home or must be confined somewhere?**

Local health departments will work in partnership with physicians and the NC Division of Public Health to determine whether a person with COVID-19 requires hospitalization or home isolation. The decision may be based on multiple factors including severity of illness, need for testing and suitability of home isolation.

## **Someone has returned from an area of sustained community transmission of COVID-19. Can I require them to be tested before returning to my facility?**

Travelers returning from outbreak affected areas will be contacted by their local health department and provided information about self-monitoring for symptoms. If their local health department decides they can return to normal activity, they should be allowed to do so without restrictions. COVID-19 testing is generally reserved for people who are experiencing symptoms of the disease.

## **Child Care Centers**

### **What should child care centers do if a child or staff member is sick?**

Children and staff should remain home if sick.

If a child or staff member develops the following symptoms, send them home as soon as possible:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

While waiting for a sick child to be picked up, caregivers should stay with the child in a room isolated from others. If the child has symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath), the caregiver should remain as far away as safely possible from the child (preferably, 6 feet). If facemasks are available, wear a facemask.

It is also recommended that child care facilities have flexible sick leave and absentee policies that do not encourage people to come in while sick.

### **What's the criteria for screening children or staff for illness?**

Conduct a Daily Health Check and ask children and staff:

- If they have had close contact (defined by the CDC as being within 6 feet of someone for 10 minutes or more) with anyone diagnosed with COVID-19.
- If anyone in their household has symptoms of respiratory illness (fever, cough, shortness of breath).

Consider screening children and employees for fever, cough or shortness of breath upon arrival each day.

People with a temperature greater than 100.4 F should be sent home until they have had no fever for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications (e.g., Advil, Tylenol).

- Anyone diagnosed with COVID-19 should remain isolated until at least 7 days after symptom onset AND  $\geq 72$  hours after symptom resolution (absence of fever without the use of fever-reducing medication and improvement in respiratory symptoms) unless otherwise instructed by their local health department.

For infants and young children, temperature can be taken by axillary (under the arm).

For children over age four, temperature can be taken orally (under the tongue). Individual plastic covers should be used on oral thermometers with each use or thermometers should be cleaned and sanitized after each use according to the manufacturer's instructions. Another option for children ages six months and older is an ear or forehead thermometer with a disposable cover that is changed after each reading. Temperature should not be taken rectally in a child care setting.

### **How can I limit chances for exposure to COVID-19 at a child care center?**

Have parents drop off children outside the classroom. Staff should meet children as they are dropped off.

- Only staff needed to maintain ratio compliance should be inside classrooms.
- Cancel or postpone any planned field trips or outings to areas with large crowds of people.

### **What are the recommendations for cleaning a child care facility?**

- Follow regular cleaning protocols and use an EPA-registered disinfectant that is active against coronaviruses. Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces throughout the day and at night.

- Keep a designated bin for separating mouthed toys and maintain awareness of children’s behaviors. When a child is done with a mouthed toy, remove it, place it in a toy bin that is inaccessible to other children, and wash hands. Clean and sanitize toys before returning to children’s area.
- Clean and sanitize all toys at the end of the day.
- Consider removing soft toys that cannot be easily cleaned during the coronavirus outbreak. Soft toys that are machine-washable should be washed often at the warmest temperature recommended on the label and dried thoroughly.

### **Are child care centers going to close? Why not?**

Child care centers in North Carolina are not required to close at this time. Child care centers should stay informed of NCDHHS’ guidance for child care settings. This includes a ban on mass gatherings of more than 50 people. Other recommendations include:

- Canceling or reducing large events and gatherings, such as assemblies and field trips.
- Limiting inter-school interactions.
- Considering distance or e-learning in some settings.
- Considering dismissals if staff or absenteeism impacts the ability to remain open. Short-term closures may also be necessary to facilitate public health investigation and/or cleaning if a case is diagnosed in a child or staff member.

### **Are child care facilities closed?**

Child care facilities are not required to close; however, child care facilities should not have more than 50 people in a single room or single space at the same time.

## **Businesses**

### **What is being done to encourage employers to allow their employees to telework and/or expand sick leave options?**

NCDHHS recommends that employers and employees use teleworking technologies to the greatest extent possible, stagger work schedules, and consider canceling non-essential travel to reduce and slow the spread of COVID-19 infection. In addition, Executive Order 120 bans more than 50 persons in a single room or single space at the same time and proper social distancing guidelines should be followed.

## **Restaurants**

### **Are restaurants and bars open for business?**

Governor Roy Cooper announced that North Carolina restaurants and bars were closed to sit-down service and limited to take-out or delivery orders starting at 5 p.m. March 17, 2020. Restaurants and bars can provide take-out and delivery services.

Grocery stores, gas stations, and convenience stores, are exempt from this order and will remain open, though they may not serve sit-down food.

## **Information**

### **Where can I get the latest information on COVID-19?**

Visit the NCDHHS website, [www.ncdhhs.gov/coronoavirus](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/coronoavirus), and check the Updates page. You should also visit the CDC website for the latest information at [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus).

### **Who can I call?**

Dial 2-1-1 or 888-892-1162. Sign up for updates by texting COVIDNC to 898211.

## Community Events

### **How does COVID-19 affect public events?**

To slow the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and reduce the number of people infected, gatherings of more than 10 people are prohibited under Executive Order 121 issued on March 27.

### **Can churches have worship services?**

To slow the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and reduce the number of people infected, gatherings of more than 10 people are prohibited under Executive Order 121 issued on March 27.

### **What about planned wedding ceremonies or receptions?**

To slow the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and reduce the number of people infected, gatherings of more than 10 people are prohibited under Executive Order 121 issued on March 27.

### **Can funerals be held?**

A funeral home can continue to conduct retail business in assisting clients with funeral arrangements. To slow the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and reduce the number of people infected, gatherings of more than 10 people are prohibited under Executive Order 121 issued on March 27.