



## What do I need to know about the novel coronavirus (COVID-19)?

### *Fast facts*

There are many things we don't yet know about novel coronavirus—the disease that has caused a worldwide pandemic. Scientists, researchers, and medical professionals are still looking for answers about how COVID-19 will behave seasonally, how to create a vaccine, and how long it remains intact in certain environments. Below is the best information we have, at this time, to help you make informed decisions.

Where did coronavirus come from? How long have we known about it?

- Coronaviruses are a widespread and a common kind of illness, responsible for a large percentage of the world's common colds. They are classified together because of how they look under a microscope rather than by their symptoms.
- Coronaviruses are **zoonotic**, meaning they come from animals. **Alpha and beta coronaviruses** can jump from animals to people (delta and gamma coronaviruses cannot) and are usually mild except for [SARS, MERS, and COVID-19](#). The three more serious coronaviruses can infect your lower respiratory tract (more of the lungs) and, therefore, are much more serious. All three [originate from bats](#), but that doesn't mean people are eating bats or being bitten by them—the viruses may spread to several other animals before developing the means to infect humans.
- COVID-19 is an acronym for CORONA VIRUS DISEASE and 2019 when it was discovered. It is also called SARS-CoV-2, and it is closely related to SARS, which was contained as an epidemic in 2003.
- [The first cases of COVID-19](#) were identified in December 2019 in the Huanan seafood market in Wuhan, China, likely from **animal to person spread**. **Person to person spread** was quickly evident. COVID-19 has since had reports of **community spread**, meaning that people have tested positive with no known connection to a person or object with the virus.
- Indications have been present for some time that a new epidemic may be caused by a virus moving from animals to humans. In 2009, the U.S. created a program to do the [complicated and expensive work](#) of watching for dangerous viruses, called **PREDICT**. In September 2019, funding was cut. Very few equivalent programs are being funded worldwide, making it difficult to shut down markets near large numbers of infected animals or high-risk meat markets.

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How many cases are in particular areas? Locally?

- [Broadstreet's interactive map](#) (best viewed in Chrome) is updated daily to show the number of people who have tested positive for novel coronavirus according to county, state, and nation. It also shows how many people have died from the virus in each area.
- Spokane Regional Health District is releasing [daily information for Spokane](#) on the number of infected and hospitalized, both total numbers and new for the day.

What exactly is Novel Coronavirus? How do I kill it?

- **Novel coronavirus** (COVID-19) is a virus made of genetic material surrounded by oily lipid fats. The spiky proteins that stick out of it help it enter healthy cells. These spiky proteins inspired the name "corona" because of their crown-like look ("corona" is Spanish for "crown").
- [According to Scientific American](#), **viruses** exist in a hard to define grey area between living and nonliving things: they cannot replicate by themselves, and they can only do so in cells that are alive. They cannot move themselves, and they aren't born or killed according to conventional definitions. Viruses often have a strong effect on the behaviour or health of their host and are a major part of the cycle of life. When talking about "killing a virus," we could be talking about breaking it up on a surface before it infects someone, or we could be talking about someone's immune system fighting the virus.
- When novel coronavirus is outside of your body, the best way to destroy it is to clean it. [Soap at a molecular level](#) has a head that bonds to water and a tail that avoids it (in favor of fats). Soap acts as a crowbar, prying open the oily coating of COVID-19 and breaking it up. The pieces float away in bubbles called **micelles**, washed away by water. Hand sanitizer works similarly, but does not wash away the broken up microorganisms from your skin or any microbes that got missed. Your best weapon is working up a lather with soap.
- There have not yet been any scientific studies on which disinfectant cleaners work best against novel coronavirus, but researchers do have [lists based on what destroys other coronaviruses](#). The **Center for Disease Control (CDC)** has released [recommendations on how much of each disinfectant to use and for how long](#). The most important thing to remember is to leave disinfectant on surfaces long enough to do its job, rather than wiping it off immediately.

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- There is currently no recommended medicine for novel coronavirus once you are infected with it, but you can try to soothe your symptoms using a fever reducer, cough medicine, and a humidifier. Antibiotics cannot treat COVID-19 because it is a virus and not a bacteria. **Antiviral** drugs or a **vaccine** may be developed in the future. [Other treatments and antiviral medicines](#) are currently being tested.
- The CDC recently [issued an update](#) on the development of a vaccine. Five federal regions (four states and a city) have been chosen to be pilot states in the CDC's plan. Washington state is not one of those in the CDC's plan, but Washington state plans to base its plan on the findings of those areas. If a safe, effective vaccine is developed, priority will be given to essential workers, health care workers, and residents and workers at long-term care facilities. Out of the 170 COVID-19 vaccines in development, only 9 have advanced into the final phase of FDA trials, known as Phase 3. These large scale trials test if the vaccine is safe for the public. Vaccines usually take years to develop, but priority has been given to finding a COVID-19 vaccine much sooner than is typical.

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