

# What is COVID-19?



AMERICAN  
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MICROBIOLOGY

## What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by a new coronavirus that presents pneumonia-like symptoms. The virus was identified in Wuhan, China, marking the beginning of its spread across the globe. Coronaviruses (CoV), so named for their “crown-like” appearance, are a large family of RNA viruses that infect mammals (including humans) and birds and include the viruses responsible for diseases like Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

## How is COVID-19 spread?

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

## What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

## How do I keep from spreading illness to others if I am sick?

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough with your elbow or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Call ahead to a healthcare professional if you develop a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness, such as cough or difficulty breathing, and have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19.

## Is there a vaccine or treatment for COVID-19?

No current vaccine for COVID-19 exists, but clinical trials are underway. Medical professionals can help relieve symptoms of people with COVID-19. Certain experimental therapeutics, such as convalescent plasma and anti-malarial drugs, have been FDA-approved as emergency treatments.

## How can I protect myself?



- Wash hands thoroughly and often with soap and water or alcohol based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- Follow all national, state and local guidelines regarding social distancing, quarantine and travel.