

FAQs for COVID-19 Outbreak

Basic

Q: What is the 2019 Novel Coronavirus?

A: The 2019 Novel Coronavirus, 2019-nCoV, or COVID-19, is a new respiratory virus from the same family as the common cold. It was first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China.

Q: What is a novel coronavirus?

A: A novel coronavirus (nCoV) is a new coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans. The 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19), is not that same as the coronaviruses that commonly circulate among humans and cause mild illness, like the common cold.

Q: What are the signs/symptoms of 2019 Novel Coronavirus and when do they appear?

A: Symptoms of coronavirus are similar to flu or colds and may include:

Runny nose, headache, cough, sore throat, fever, and a general feeling of being unwell.

CDC believes at this time that symptoms of COVID-19 may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure.

Q: Is the 2019 Novel Coronavirus the same as the MERS or SARS virus?

A: No. The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is a different virus, but in the same virus family as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). Most coronaviruses cause only mild symptoms, similar to that of the common cold. SARS, MERS, and the newly emerging COVID-19 are more severe virus strains in the coronavirus family that can cause more pneumonia and death. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses, some causing illness in people and others that circulate among animals, including camels, cats and bats.

Q: Does the 2019 Novel Coronavirus affect children and adults differently?

A: We are still learning about the novel coronavirus. Individuals believed to be at higher risk for complications include adults aged 65 years and older, young children, pregnant women, and people who are immunocompromised or who have chronic heart, lung, or kidney conditions.

Q: Am I at risk for novel coronavirus from a package or products shipping from China?

A: In general, because of poor survivability of these coronaviruses on surfaces, there is likely very low risk of spread from products or packaging that are shipped over a period of days or weeks. Coronaviruses are generally thought to be spread most often by respiratory droplets. 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.

Q: What about animals or animal products imported from China?

A: CDC does not have any evidence to suggest that animals or animal products imported from China pose a risk for spreading COVID-19 in the United States. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the U.S. Fish and

Wildlife Service (FWS) play distinct but complementary roles in regulating the importation of live animals and animal products into the United States. CDC regulates animals and animal products that pose a threat to human health, USDA regulates external icon animals and animal products that pose a threat to agriculture; and FWS regulates external icon importation of endangered species and wildlife that can harm the health and welfare of humans, the interests of agriculture, horticulture, or forestry, and the welfare and survival of wildlife resources.

Q: Should I be concerned about pets or other animals and COVID-19?

A: While this virus seems to have emerged from an animal source, it is now spreading from person-to-person. CDC recommends that people traveling to China avoid animals both live and dead, but there is no reason to think that any animals or pets in the United States might be a source of infection with this new coronavirus.

Q: Should I avoid contact with pets or other animals if I am sick?

A: Do not handle pets or other animals while sick. Although there have not been reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19, several types of coronaviruses can cause illness in animals and spread between animals and people. Until we know more, avoid contact with animals and wear a facemask if you must be around animals or care for a pet while sick.

Q: Is the 2019 Novel coronavirus different than Ebola?

A: Yes, COVID-19 is a different virus and not in the same family of viruses as Ebola. The two viruses have different ways of spreading and different signs and symptoms.

Q: How is the 2019 Novel coronavirus different from the flu and the common cold?

A: Individuals with COVID-19 infection, the flu, or a cold typically develop respiratory symptoms such as fever, cough and runny nose. Even though many symptoms are alike, they are caused by different viruses. Because of their similarities, it can be difficult to identify the disease based on symptoms alone. That's why laboratory tests are required to confirm if someone is infected with COVID-19.

Q: What causes a person to die from the 2019 Novel coronavirus?

A: Individuals with COVID-19 infection may progress to develop a severe pneumonia that can lead to death. Individuals believed to be at higher risk for complications include adults aged 60 years and older, young children, pregnant women, and people who are immunocompromised or who have chronic heart, lung, or kidney conditions.

Q: How deadly is the 2019 Novel coronavirus?

A: These numbers vary by age group and country, for up to date information please check: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/>

Protection

Q: What can people do to prevent infection with the 2019 novel Coronavirus?

A: Follow CDC Travel Health Notices ([cdc.gov/travel](https://www.cdc.gov/travel)). CDC advises that people follow basic tips to help prevent respiratory illnesses:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick with respiratory symptoms.
- 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.

Q: Is there a test that can tell if someone has the 2019 novel Coronavirus?

A: Yes. The CDC has developed a real time reverse transcriptase-Polymerase Chain Reaction test that that can diagnose 2019 novel coronavirus. Diagnostic testing for COVID-19 can be conducted at the SD Public Health Laboratory.

Q: Should I be tested?

A: Travelers returning from affected areas and at risk com who are within the 14-day self-monitoring period and close contacts to a confirm COVID-19 case who develop symptoms of novel coronavirus infection (e.g., fever, cough, and shortness of breath) are the primary groups recommended to be tested, after receiving authorization from the South Dakota Department of Health (1-800-592-1861).

Q: Should I wear a facemask in the community to prevent 2019 novel Coronavirus?

A: CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19. You should only wear a mask if a healthcare professional recommends it. A facemask should be used by people who have COVID-19 and are showing symptoms. This is to protect others from the risk of getting infected. The use of facemasks also is crucial for health workers and other people who are taking care of someone infected with COVID-19 in close settings (at home or in a health care facility).

Q: Am I at risk?

A: The immediate risk of COVID-19 infection to the general public is low.

Q: Is there a vaccine?

A: No. Currently, there is not a vaccine for COVID-19.

Q: What are the treatments for COVID-19?

A: Currently, there are no specific treatments recommended for illnesses caused by COVID-19. Medical care is supportive to help relieve symptoms.

Outbreak

Q: What is the source of this new coronavirus?

A: Public health officials and partners are working hard to identify the source of COVID-19. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses, some causing illness in people and others that circulate among animals, including camels, cats, and bats.

Q: How worried should people be about the 2019 Novel Coronavirus in the U.S.?

A: The immediate risk of COVID-19 infection to the general public is low. Risk is dependent on exposure, so travelers returning from affected areas and close contacts to a confirmed COVID-19 case are at higher risk of COVID-19 infection. It is always good practice to be vigilant and wash your hands frequently to reduce risk.

Q: How contagious is 2019 Novel Coronavirus?

A: Because it is a coronavirus that has not been studied, scientists do not currently know how contagious it is. COVID-19 does spread from person-to-person via close contact (around 6 feet), primarily through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

Q: How rapidly does the coronavirus spread?

A: Current understanding about how the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) spreads is largely based on what is known about similar coronaviruses. People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic. The virus is spread mainly from person-to-person with infection occurring ~2–14 days after contact with an infected person.

Q: Has anyone in the United States been diagnosed with COVID-19?

A: Yes. The number of cases is changing rapidly. For up to date information please check <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-in-us.html>.

Q: Has anyone in South Dakota been diagnosed with COVID-19?

A: South Dakota Department of Health is working closely with CDC to respond to the outbreak of this novel coronavirus. Updated information on cases in South Dakota can be found at <https://doh.sd.gov/news/Coronavirus.aspx>.

Q: Am I risk for contracting COVID-19 in South Dakota?

A: The risk for infection with COVID-19 in South Dakota is based on travel and exposure to symptomatic cases. If you feel you may be at risk check the website for up to date guidance.

Transmission

Q: How does COVID-19 spread?

A: Because COVID-19 is a new disease in humans, much is unknown about how it spreads. Based on knowledge of other coronaviruses, it's thought to spread from person-to-person through the air by coughing, sneezing, or touching an infected person. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching an object or surface with the virus on it, and then touching his/her mouth, nose, or eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

Q: Can a person spread COVID-19 even if they have no symptoms?

A: With most respiratory viruses, people are thought to be most contagious when they have the most symptoms or feel the sickest. It has not been confirmed whether infected individuals without symptoms can spread COVID-19 to other people.

Q: Does South Dakota have dedicated treatment centers for those who might be infected?

A: No. South Dakota Department of Health is working with local healthcare providers, hospitals, and ambulances to ensure they are prepared to care for any COVID-19 patients in our state.

Q: Should South Dakotans stop shaking hands, hugging, and touching others to prevent transmission of COVID-19?

A: Simple steps to avoid spreading germs, such as washing your hands often and avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth, are always recommended.

Q: Should schools and social gatherings in South Dakota be canceled because of COVID-19?

A: Currently, the risk for COVID-19 in South Dakota is rapidly changing and event cancellations should be made on a case by case basis.

Q: Are pregnant women more susceptible to infection, or at increased risk for severe illness, morbidity, or mortality with COVID-19, compared with the general public?

A: We do not have information from published scientific reports about susceptibility of pregnant women to COVID-19. Pregnant women experience immunologic and physiologic changes which might make them more susceptible to viral respiratory infections, including COVID-19. Pregnant women also might be at risk for severe illness, morbidity, or mortality compared to the general population as observed in cases of other related coronavirus infections [including severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV) and Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV)] and other viral respiratory infections, such as influenza, during pregnancy.

Though person-to-person spread of COVID-19, has been observed in the United States among close contacts, this virus is not currently spreading among persons in the community in the United States and the immediate risk to the people in South Dakota is low. Pregnant women should engage in usual preventive actions to avoid infection like washing hands often and avoiding people who are sick.

Q: Are pregnant healthcare personnel at increased risk for adverse outcomes if they care for patients with COVID-19?

A: Pregnant healthcare personnel (HCP) should follow risk assessment and infection control guidelines for HCP exposed to patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19. Adherence to recommended infection prevention and control practices is an important part of protecting all HCP in healthcare settings. Information on COVID-19 in pregnancy is very limited; facilities may want to consider limiting exposure of pregnant HCP to patients with confirmed or suspected COVID-19, especially during higher risk procedures (e.g., aerosol-generating procedures) if feasible based on staffing availability.

Travel

Q: Is it safe to visit China or other countries where COVID-19 cases have occurred?

A: Concerned travelers can visit CDC's Traveler's Health page at <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list> for up-to-date Travel Health Notices for China, as well as other destinations.

Q: What if I recently traveled to an affected country and then became sick?

A: If you develop a fever, cough, or shortness of breath within 14 days of leaving the COVID-19 affected country, you should:

- Call ahead to your healthcare provider before arriving at a clinic or hospital. Please provide information about your recent travel and your symptoms.
- Avoid contact with others while sick.
- Avoid travel while sick.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.

Q: Should people delay their travel plans to countries other than China because of the outbreak?

A: CDC has issued Travel Health Notices related to COVID-19 for countries. Travelers are encouraged to search for travel recommendations by country on CDC's Traveler's Health page at <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list>.

In the meantime, there are some steps that travelers should take to stay healthy, regardless of their destination:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Get the flu shot.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you sneeze or cough.

Q: If a person can spread coronavirus without symptoms, how effective are travel restrictions?

A: It has not been proven that a person can spread the novel coronavirus when they do not have symptoms.

Control

Q: What is the United States doing to make sure that COVID-19 does not spread?

A: Multiple federal agencies, including CDC, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department of Homeland Security, are working closely with state and local partners to respond to this emerging health threat. More information about CDC's response to COVID-19 is available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>.

Q: What can healthcare providers in South Dakota do to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

A: Healthcare providers should ask about recent travel of patients and be alert for travelers returning from affected countries with symptoms of novel coronavirus, such as fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Healthcare providers and laboratories should report suspected COVID-19 cases immediately to SD-DOH by calling (1-800-592-1861).

Q: What can communities do to prepare for COVID-19?

A: While the current risk for this new virus to the public in South Dakota is low, everyone can do their part to help us respond to this emerging public health threat:

- It's currently influenza and respiratory disease season and SD-DOH and CDC recommend getting a flu vaccine, taking everyday preventive actions to help stop the spread of germs, and taking antiviral medication for influenza, if prescribed.
- If you are a healthcare provider, be alert for symptoms of novel coronavirus, such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath, among travelers returning from affected countries.
- If you are a healthcare provider caring for a COVID-19 patient or a public health responder, please take care of yourself and follow recommended infection control procedures.
- Returning travelers from affected countries and individuals who had close contact with a confirmed novel coronavirus cases should monitor themselves (for 14 days after their last exposure) for symptoms of novel coronavirus, such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath.
- For individuals who become sick with COVID-19, follow CDC's recommendations on how to reduce the risk of spreading illness to others (such as wearing a facemask around others and staying home, except for medical care). This guidance can be found on the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/steps-when-sick.html>.
- Follow the CDC Guidance to get your household ready for COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/get-your-household-ready-for-COVID-19.html>

Q: What steps are being taken by the state to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

A: SD-DOH is preparing for the potential spread of the virus to our state by closely monitoring travelers returning from affected countries for symptoms of novel coronavirus infection. We are also working closely with healthcare providers, hospitals, laboratories, and federal partners to implement the latest guidance to ensure that we are ready if there are COVID-19 infections in South Dakota. Up-to-date information can be found on South Dakota Department of Health's website at <https://doh.sd.gov/news/Coronavirus.aspx>.

Response to Novel Coronavirus

Q: What should people do if they think they have COVID-19?

A: Travelers returning from affected countries and individuals with close contact to a confirmed novel coronavirus case should call ahead to their healthcare provider before arriving at a clinic or hospital if they develop symptoms of infection, such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath. Testing may be recommended in consultation with your medical provider and SD-DOH.

Q: How long will it take to develop a vaccine for COVID-19?

A: There is no vaccine available to protect against COVID-19, although efforts to develop one are underway. The National Institute of Health is working on a vaccine and [trials](#) are tentatively scheduled to begin in the coming months.

Q: Will hospitals be able to handle a major outbreak of COVID-19?

A: CDC and state health departments are already working closely with local healthcare systems to prepare for COVID-19 cases and prevent the spread of the virus in the United States.

Q: What can I do to help?

A: While the current risk for this new virus to the South Dakota public is low, everyone can do their part to help us respond to this emerging public health threat:

- It's currently flu and respiratory disease season and SD-DOH recommends getting a flu vaccine, taking everyday preventive actions to help stop the spread of germs (avoid people who are sick, wash hands often, and avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth), and taking antiviral medications for flu, if prescribed.
- If you are a healthcare provider, be alert for symptoms of novel coronavirus infection, such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath, among travelers who recently returned from affected countries.