COVID-19 Outbreak Q&A

What is a coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. In humans, several coronaviruses are known to cause respiratory infections ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The most recently discovered coronavirus causes coronavirus disease COVID-19. *Source:* *WHO*

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus. This new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. *Source:* *WHO*

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are: fever, tiredness and dry cough. Some patients may have: aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat and diarrhea. These symptoms are usually mild and begin gradually. Some people become infected but don't develop any symptoms and don't feel unwell. *Source:* *WHO*

Who is most vulnerable?

Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like high blood pressure, heart problems or diabetes, are more likely to develop serious illness. People with fever, cough and difficulty breathing should seek medical attention. *Source:* *WHO*

How does COVID-19 spread?

People can catch COVID-19 from others who have the virus. The disease can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth which are spread when a person with COVID-19 coughs or exhales. These droplets land on objects and surfaces around the person. Other people then catch COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. People can also catch COVID-19 if they breathe in droplets from a person with COVID-19 who coughs out or exhales droplets. This is why it is important to stay more than 1 meter (3 feet) away from a person who is sick. *Source:* *WHO*

Can COVID-19 be caught from a person who has no symptoms?

The main way the disease spreads is through respiratory droplets expelled by someone who is coughing. The risk of catching COVID-19 from someone with no symptoms at all is very low. However, many people with COVID-19 experience only mild symptoms. This is particularly true at the early stages of the disease. It is therefore possible to catch COVID-19 from someone who has, for example, just a mild cough and does not feel ill. *Source:* *WHO*

How can I avoid the risk of infection?

Here are four precautions you and your family can take to avoid infection: 1) Wash your hands frequently using soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub (if available), 2) Cover mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue when coughing or sneezing. Dispose of used tissue immediately, 3) Avoid close contact with anyone who has cold or flu-like symptoms, and 4) Seek medical care early if you or your child has a fever, cough or difficulty breathing. *Source:* *UNICEF*

What should I do if my child or family member has symptoms of COVID-19?

Seek medical attention but remember that it's flu season in the Northern Hemisphere, and symptoms of COVID-19 such as cough or fever can be similar to those of the flu, or the common cold – which are a lot more frequent. Continue to follow good hand and respiratory hygiene practices like regular handwashing, and keep your child or family member up to date with vaccinations – so that your child or family member is protected against other viruses and bacteria causing diseases.

As with other respiratory infections like the flu, seek care early if you, your child, or family member are having symptoms, and try to avoid going to public places (workplace, schools, public transport), to prevent it spreading to others. *Source:* *UNICEF*

What is the best way to wash hands properly?

Wet hands with running water, apply enough soap to cover wet hands, scrub all surfaces of the hands – including back of hands, between fingers and under nails – for at least 20 seconds, rinse thoroughly with running water, and finally dry hands with a clean cloth or single-use towel.

Wash your hands often, especially before eating; after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; and going to the bathroom. 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. *Source: UNICEF*

Should I wear a medical mask?

The use of a medical mask is advised if you have respiratory symptoms (coughing or sneezing) to protect others. If you don't have any symptoms, then there is no need to wear a mask. If masks are worn, they must be used and disposed of properly to ensure their effectiveness and to avoid any increased risk of transmitting the virus. The use of a mask alone is not enough to stop infections and must be combined with frequent hand washing, covering sneezes and coughs, and avoiding close contact with anyone with cold or flu-like symptoms (coughing, sneezing, fever). *Source: UNICEF*

Can pregnant women pass coronavirus to unborn children?

At this time, there is not enough evidence to determine whether the virus is transmitted from a mother to her baby during pregnancy, or the potential impact this may have on the baby. This is currently being investigated. Pregnant women should continue to follow appropriate precautions to protect themselves from exposure to the virus, and seek medical care early, if experiencing symptoms, such as fever, cough or difficulty breathing. *Source: UNICEF*

Is it safe for a mother to breastfeed if she is infected with coronavirus?

Symptomatic mothers well enough to breastfeed should continue breastfeeding while applying all the necessary precautions, such as wearing a mask when near a child (including during feeding), washing hands before and after contact with the child (including feeding), and cleaning/disinfecting contaminated surfaces – as should be done in all cases where anyone with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 interacts with others, including children. If a mother is too ill, she should be encouraged to express milk and give it to the child via a clean cup and/or spoon – all while following the same infection prevention methods. *Source: UNICEF*

How can people help stop stigma related to COVID-19?

People can fight stigma and help, not hurt, others by providing social support. Counter stigma by learning and sharing facts. Communicating the facts that viruses do not target specific racial or ethnic groups and how COVID-19 actually spreads can help stop stigma. *Source: CDC*

How can I help my child cope with a disaster?

Before: Talk to your children so that they know you are prepared to keep them safe. Review safety plans before a disaster or emergency happens. Having a plan will increase your children's confidence and help give them a sense of control.

During: Stay calm and reassure your children. Talk to children about what is happening in a way that they can understand.   Keep it simple and appropriate for each child's age.

After: Provide children with opportunities to talk about what they went through or what they think about it. Encourage them to share concerns and ask questions. You can help your children feel a sense of control and manage their feelings by encouraging them to take action directly related to the disaster. For example, children can help others after a disaster, including volunteering to help community or family members in a safe environment. Children should NOT participate in disaster cleanup activities for health and safety reasons.

It is difficult to predict how some children will respond to disasters and traumatic events. Because parents, teachers, and other adults see children in different situations, it is important for them to work together to share information about how each child is coping after a traumatic event. *Source: CDC*

What is UNICEF doing to help?

UNICEF is working with the World Health Organization, governments and partners to equip children, pregnant women and their families with the information they need to know on how to prevent the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). This includes the development of online training modules for health workers, and FAQs and guidance for parents, pregnant women and children. UNICEF has reached more than 80 million people with transmission prevention messages across the East Asia and Pacific region and is aiming to reach 25 million people with risk education, critical supplies, adequate health care, and education and child protection services across South Asia. UNICEF is also tackling misinformation about the virus by working with online partners like Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and TikTok to make sure that accurate advice is available, as well as taking steps to inform the public when inaccurate information emerges. *Source: UNICEF*