

# CORONAVIRUS/COVID-19 FACTS AND FAQs

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

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases including Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). 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.

## **How did this virus get its name?**

On Feb. 11, 2020, the World Health Organization announced the official name for the new coronavirus virus would be COVID-19. "CO" stands for "corona," "VI" stands for "virus," D stands for "disease" and 19 indicates the year the virus was first discovered. Before this, the virus was referred to as the "2019 novel coronavirus," which means it was a new strain not previously identified in humans.

## **Where did COVID-19 come from?**

The World Health Organization states that coronaviruses are zoonotic, which means they are transmitted from animals to people. A specific animal source of COVID-19 has not been identified, but the virus has been linked to a large seafood and live animal market.

## **What are the symptoms of COVID-19?**

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), individuals diagnosed with this coronavirus experience a mild to severe respiratory illness. Symptoms include fever, cough and shortness of breath. Individuals with severe complications from the virus often develop pneumonia in both lungs.

## **How does the virus spread?**

The virus is spread person-to-person. According to the CDC, spread is happening mainly between people who are in close contact (within 6 feet) of each other via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The droplets land on the noses and mouths of other people, who then inhale them. The CDC says it may be possible for the virus to spread by touching a surface or object with the virus and then a person touching their mouth, nose or eyes, but this is not thought to be the main method of spread. As the virus was discovered just a few months ago, more research is required to learn more about the spread pattern of the virus. The incubation period ranges from 2 to 14 days after exposure (most cases occurring at approximately 5 days.) People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest.) Some spread might be possible before people show symptoms.

## **Do I need to wear a protective mask?**

There is no need for healthy individuals to wear surgical masks to guard against coronavirus. Individuals should only wear a mask if they are ill or if it is recommended by a health care professional. Masks must be used and disposed of properly to be effective.

## **Is there a cure for the virus?**

There is no specific medication to treat COVID-19; supportive care is provided to treat symptoms. There is currently no vaccine to protect against COVID-19. Individuals should take care to avoid being exposed to the virus through hygiene and sanitary practices. Please seek immediate medical care to relieve symptoms if infected with the virus.

### How do I protect myself and others?

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19 or medication to directly treat COVID-19. The best way to protect yourself is to avoid being exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19. The CDC recommends maintaining personal preventative actions such as:

- Avoiding close contact with those who are sick
- Not touching your eyes, mouth or nose, especially with unwashed hands
- Washing your hands often with soap and warm water for last least 20 seconds
- Clean objects and surfaces that are frequently touched
- Limit your exposure to others if you are sick
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue
- Do not share food, drinks, utensils, or toothbrushes

### What should I do if I think I have COVID-19?

Avoid direct contact with other people and immediately request to be seen by health care if you feel sick with a fever, cough or difficulty breathing. Make sure to give your provider details of any symptoms and potential contact with individuals who may have recently traveled.

### Will I be tested for COVID-19?

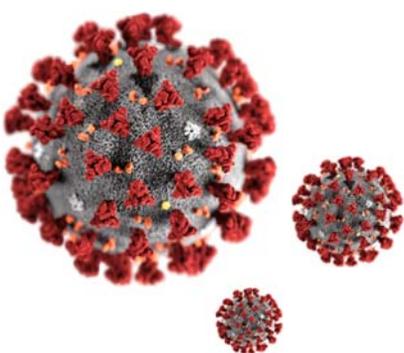
You will be tested if your provider suspects you have COVID-19.

### What is CDCR/CCHCS doing to prepare for a potential outbreak?

CDCR and CCHCS are dedicated to the safety of everyone who lives, works, and visits our state prisons. We have longstanding emergency response plans in place to address communicable disease outbreaks such as influenza, measles, mumps, norovirus, as well as coronavirus. Based on guidance from the CDC, and to ensure we are as prepared as possible to respond to any exposure to COVID-19 specifically, we are building upon the robust influenza infection control guidelines already in place at each institution. These guidelines clearly define procedures for prevention of transmission, management of suspected and confirmed cases including isolation and quarantine protocols, surveillance of patients, and routine cleaning and disinfection procedures.

If there is a suspected case of COVID-19, we will follow the policies and procedures already in place for modified programming for any affected housing units and areas. We will continue to update guidelines for COVID-19 response based on CDC recommendations and will maintain cooperation with local and state health departments and the law enforcement community.

COVID-19 is new, but the most important aspect of preparedness is remaining calm. Don't panic. We understand staff, families, and those who visit state prisons as program providers or volunteers may have concerns and anxiety about COVID-19, but please be assured that there is no need for alarm. All should follow the precautions recommended by CDC, which expand upon precautions advised during cold and flu season. The spread of COVID-19 can be significantly reduced with proper infection control measures and good individual hygiene practices.



**Wet** your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.



**Lather** your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Be sure to lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.



**Scrub** your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice.



**Rinse** hands well under clean, running water.



**Dry** hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

**WASH YOUR HANDS  
FREQUENTLY**