

CORONAVIRUS AND COVID-19: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Information about the coronavirus and COVID-19 will continue to evolve based on new research. In this fact sheet, we have gathered information from medical experts and agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the American Academy of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery to provide you with current information and advice on maintaining your day-to-day life and well-being.

CORONAVIRUS AND COVID-19

The coronavirus is one in a family of coronaviruses, named for the crown-like appearance of spikes on their surface. COVID-19 is the disease that can result from exposure, named for “coronavirus disease,” which was first identified in 2019.

SYMPTOMS AND TREATMENT OF COVID-19

Many may remain “asymptomatic,” or show no symptoms, and may not realize they are infected. Others will show mild symptoms of fever, cough, body aches, fatigue or gastrointestinal issues, which can take two to three weeks to emerge after infection. Shortness of breath is a more serious sign of illness, which may eventually require hospitalization, including use of a ventilator. Warning signs include pain or pressure in the chest, confusion or unresponsiveness and bluish lips or face. A sudden loss of smell or taste may precede other symptoms. Anyone exhibiting these symptoms should seek immediate medical attention.

There is no specific medicine to treat COVID-19 at this time, and many are able to recover at home. The CDC suggests getting plenty of rest, staying hydrated, avoiding contact with others (including those in your household) and sanitizing high-contact surfaces in the home.

Doctors and researchers are continually learning more about the virus and multiple drugs are being studied as possible treatments, though it is too early to evaluate their effectiveness.

The standard of care focuses on supportive care to relieve symptoms, and this does not currently differ for patients with cancer versus those without.

MINIMIZING YOUR RISK

Those who are immunocompromised due to cancer treatment, or those who have existing respiratory conditions, should be extra cautious about reducing exposure by staying at home, avoiding crowds and sanitizing outside items and packages.

The coronavirus is passed primarily through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person breathes, coughs or sneezes. One of the most effective defenses against transmission is the use of face masks worn in public and when in contact with anyone outside your residence. You should wear these whether or not your city, county or state has any lockdown measures. Remember that people may be contagious without realizing they are infected. Medical-grade masks can help prevent the transmission, while the CDC recommends the use of cloth masks, such as fabric masks, scarves and bandanas. Masks should be worn no matter what the reactions of others are around you, as they have proven to limit the spread of the virus.

It is not entirely clear how long the virus persists in the air or on surfaces. To be safe, use hand coverings when interacting with outside things, such as elevator buttons or door handles. You should also consider sanitizing packages with bleach or other household cleaners.

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SOCIAL DISTANCING

Social distancing is the practice of avoiding large gatherings and maintaining a distance of at least six feet from others while in public. Many local, state and federal government offices have also mandated limited activity outside of the home, restrictions on the size of groups, closure of businesses and other regulations for the sake of public health. These policies will vary by municipality and state.

WHAT IF I HAVE BEEN EXPOSED OR EXHIBIT SYMPTOMS?

If you are concerned that you have been infected by the coronavirus or are exhibiting any symptoms, contact your health care team immediately. If an in-person visit is not possible, you may be able to reach your doctor for a consultation over the phone or via video-conference. Your doctor can advise on next steps, such as testing and quarantine measures, as needed.

HOW LONG WILL THE CORONAVIRUS AND COVID-19 BE A THREAT?

At this stage, it is unclear how long social distancing and other practices will be part of daily life. Researchers around the world are working to develop a vaccine for COVID-19, though this process could take 12 months or longer due to clinical trials and other viability tests.

Coping with a situation like the coronavirus pandemic is not easy for anyone, especially those who are affected by cancer. CancerCare's master's-prepared oncology social workers can provide emotional support and help you access additional resources in your area. To speak with an oncology social worker, call our toll-free Hopeline at 800-813-HOPE (4673) or visit www.cancercare.org to learn more. Additional resources are available at cancercare.org/coronavirus.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Information on the coronavirus and COVID-19 is changing rapidly. For the latest, look to these trusted and reputable sources:

Coronavirus.gov

www.coronavirus.gov

American Academy of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery

www.entnet.org/content/coronavirus-disease-2019-resources

American Society for Clinical Oncology

www.asco.org/asco-coronavirus-information

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov

National Cancer Institute

www.cancer.gov/contact/emergency-preparedness/coronavirus

World Health Organization

www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019

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To learn more, visit www.cancercare.org or call **800-813-HOPE (4673)**.

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Edited by Stewart B. Fleishman, MD, and Lauren Brailey, LMSW

This fact sheet is supported by a contribution from GlaxoSmithKline, Lilly, Novartis Oncology and Seattle Genetics.



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National Office • 275 Seventh Avenue • New York, NY 10001

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