

# Coronavirus (COVID-19) - Diagnosed or Suspected

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## Definition

You or your child have symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough or SOB) AND:

- Diagnosis was confirmed by positive lab test OR
- Suspected diagnosis was made by a doctor OR
- You suspect COVID-19 based on symptoms consistent with COVID-19 AND widespread prevalence in your community. In areas with major community spread, lab test confirmation will mainly be indicated on patients who need hospitalization.

## COVID-19 Basics

- COVID-19 Symptoms: The most common symptoms are fever, cough and shortness of breath. Less common symptoms are muscle aches, chills, headache, sore throat, runny nose and even diarrhea.
- Incubation Period for Symptoms: average 5 days (range 2 to 14 days) after coming in contact with a person who has COVID-19.
- Mild Infections: 80% have a mild illness, much like normal flu or a bad cold. The symptoms usually last 2 weeks.
- No Symptoms but Infected: About 20% of infected patients have no symptoms.
- Severe Infections: 20% of those with symptoms develop trouble breathing from viral pneumonia. Many of these patients need to be admitted to the hospital. People with complications generally recover in 3 to 6 weeks.
- Deaths: Children generally have a mild illness and recover quickly. Pediatric deaths are very rare. Older adults, especially those with chronic lung disease or weak immune systems, have the highest death rates. The overall death rate is around 1%.
- Vaccine: There currently is no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. Many labs are working on developing a vaccine, but that will take at least a year.
- Treatment: Currently, there are no effective anti-viral medicines. Treatment is supportive. Oxygen and IV fluids are used for hospitalized patients. Some patients need to be placed on a ventilator machine to help their breathing.

## Trusted Sources for Accurate COVID-19 Information - CDC and AAP

- Nurse call centers and doctors' offices are overloaded with calls. They need to keep their lines open for sick patients.
- To meet the extreme demand for COVID-19 information, when possible, find your answers online. Here are the most reliable websites:
- CDC website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus>
- American Academy of Pediatrics parent website: [www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org)
- Nurse advice lines and medical call centers are needed for sick patient calls.

## COVID-19 - How it is Spread

- COVID-19 is spread from person to person.
- The virus spreads from respiratory droplets produced when a person coughs or sneezes. The infected

droplets can then be inhaled by a nearby person or land on the surface of their eyes.

- Most infected people also have respiratory secretions on their hands. These secretions get transferred to healthy people on doorknobs, faucet handles etc. The virus then gets transferred to healthy people when they touch their face or rub their eyes.
- These methods are how most respiratory viruses spread.

## Care Advice

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### 1. **COVID-19 Infection with Mild Symptoms - Overview:**

- You or your child have been diagnosed as probably having COVID-19 OR
- You or your doctor suspect COVID-19 because it is widespread in your community and you have developed symptoms that match (cough and/or fever).
- You probably did not receive a lab test for COVID-19. It doesn't matter. Most infections are mild, especially in children.
- Here's some care advice to help the sick person feel better.

### 2. **Treatment of Symptoms:**

- The treatment is the same whether you have COVID-19, influenza or some other respiratory virus.
- The only difference for COVID-19 is you need to stay on home isolation until you recover. Reason: You want to protect other people from getting it.
- Treat the symptoms that are bothering you the most.
- There is no anti-viral medication for treating COVID-19.
- Antibiotics are not helpful for viral infections.
- You don't need to call or see your doctor unless you develop trouble breathing or become worse in any other way.

### 3. **Fever Treatment:**

- For fever above 102 F (39 C), you may use acetaminophen or ibuprofen if the patient is uncomfortable. (See Dosage table).
- For fevers 100-102 F (37.8 to 39 C), fever medicines are not needed. Reason: Fever turns on your body's immune system. Fever helps fight the infection.
- Exception: If the patient also has pain, treat it.
- Fluids: Offer cool fluids in unlimited amounts. Reason: prevent dehydration. Staying well hydrated helps the body sweat and give off heat.

#### 4. **Homemade Cough Medicine:**

- Age: 3 Months to 1 year:
- Give warm clear fluids (e.g., apple juice or lemonade) to thin the mucus and relax the airway. Dosage: 1-3 teaspoons (5-15 ml) four times per day.
- Note to Triager: Option to be discussed only if caller complains that nothing else helps: Give a small amount of corn syrup. Dosage: 1/4 teaspoon (1 ml). Can give up to 4 times a day when coughing. Caution: Avoid honey until 1 year old (Reason: risk for botulism).
- Age 1 year and older: Use Honey 1/2 to 1 tsp (2 to 5 ml) as needed as a homemade cough medicine. It can thin the secretions and loosen the cough. (If not available, can use corn syrup.) OTC cough syrups containing honey are also available. They are not more effective than plain honey and cost much more per dose.
- Age 6 years and older: Use Cough Drops (throat drops) to decrease the tickle in the throat. If not available, can use hard candy. Avoid cough drops before 6 years. Reason: risk of choking.
- OTC cough medicines are not recommended. (Reason: no proven benefit for children.) Honey has been shown to work better.
- Don't use OTC cough medicines under 6 years of age. Reason: Cough is a protective reflex.

#### 5. **Fluids - Stay well Hydrated:**

- Drink lots of fluids. Water is best.
- Goal: Keep the patient well hydrated.
- It loosens up any phlegm in the lungs. Then it's easier to cough up.
- It helps the body sweat and give off heat.

#### 6. **Home Isolation Is Needed:**

- Isolation means separating sick people with a contagious disease from people who are not sick. (CDC) That means stay at home.
- Isolate the sick patient. Reason: They are contagious and can spread their infection to others.
- Other family members should also stay at home on quarantine. Living with a suspected COVID-19 patient implies close contact has occurred.
- Do **Not** allow any visitors. (such as friends)
- Do **Not** go to school or work.
- Do **Not** go to stores, restaurants, places of worship or other public places.
- Avoid public transportation or ride sharing.
- The patient needs to stay at home but does not need to be confined to a single room. Preventing spread of respiratory infections within a home is nearly impossible. The sick person should try to avoid very close contact with other family members. That includes hugging, kissing, sitting next to or sleeping in the same bed.
- None of this is realistic for young children.

#### 7. **COVID-19 Testing - Who Needs It:**

- Tests for COVID-19 are only done on people who are sick (have a fever OR cough) AND also have a health history that puts them at definite risk for having COVID-19. That mainly means close contact with someone who has lab confirmed or suspected COVID-19 disease.
- As community spread increases, who needs testing changes.
- When cases of COVID-19 are everywhere, testing becomes pointless on mildly ill patients.
- Testing will mainly be helpful for patients who have serious symptoms or need admission to the hospital.

## 8. How to Protect Others - When You or Your Child are Sick:

- Stay home from school or work if you are sick. Your doctor or local health department will tell you when it is safe to return.
- Cough and sneeze into your shirt sleeve or inner elbow. Don't cough into your hand or the air.
- If available, sneeze into a tissue and throw it into trash can.
- Wash hands often with soap and water. After coughing or sneezing are important times.
- Don't share glasses, plates or eating utensils.
- Wear a face mask when around others.
- Always wear a face mask (if available) if you have to leave your home (such as going to a medical facility). Always call first to get approval and careful directions.

## Call Your Doctor Back If...

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- Trouble breathing occurs
- You think you or your child needs to be seen
- Symptoms become worse

*This handout is intended for informational purposes only and should not be used as a substitute for the care and advice of a medical professional. The accuracy of the information contained in this handout is not guaranteed and there may be variations in treatment that your doctor or nurse may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.*

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