

**What is a coronavirus?**

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which may cause illness in animals or humans. 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.

**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.

**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. 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 six feet from others.

**Can the virus that causes COVID-19 be transmitted through the air?**

Studies to date suggest that the virus that causes COVID-19 is mainly transmitted through contact with respiratory droplets rather than through the air. Although the droplets are small, they are too big and heavy to be carried to another person in the air more than about 1 meter.

**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. 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.

**What can I do to protect myself and prevent the spread of disease?**

You can reduce your chances of being infected or spreading COVID-19 by taking some simple precautions:

- Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water for at least 20 to thirty seconds. Washing your hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand rub kills viruses that may be on your hands. Soap and water is preferred, when available.
- Maintain at least six feet distance between yourself and others. If your work assignments and duties do not permit you to be more than six feet from your co-workers, including but not limited to: ride sharing in company vehicles, collecting fares on trains, working jointly on tasks that require more than one person, working in confined space, etc., per CDC guidance (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/prevention.html>). If you are coughing or sneezing you will be provided a facemask to protect others.
- When someone coughs or sneezes, they spray small liquid droplets from their nose or mouth which may contain virus. If you are too close, you can breathe in the droplets, including the COVID-19 virus if the person coughing has the disease.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth. Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth. From there, the virus can enter your body and can make you sick.

- Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately. Droplets spread virus. By following good respiratory hygiene, you protect the people around you from viruses such as cold, flu and COVID-19.
- Stay home if you feel sick. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and call in advance. Follow the instructions from your doctor or healthcare provider. National and local authorities will have the most up to date information on the situation in your area. Calling in advance will allow your health care provider to quickly direct you to the right health facility. This will also protect you and help prevent spread of viruses and other infections.
- Self-isolate by staying at home if you begin to feel unwell, even with mild symptoms such as headache, low grade fever 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or above) and slight runny nose, until you recover. If it is essential for you to have someone bring you supplies or to go out, e.g. to buy food, then wear a mask to avoid infecting other people. Avoiding contact with others and visits to medical facilities will allow these facilities to operate more effectively and help protect you and others from possible COVID-19 and other viruses.
- If you develop fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical advice promptly as this may be due to a respiratory infection or other serious condition. Call in advance and tell your provider of any recent travel or contact with travelers. Calling in advance will allow your health care provider to quickly direct you to the right health facility. This will also help to prevent possible spread of COVID-19 and other viruses.

#### **Who is at risk of developing severe illness?**

While we are still learning about how COVID-19 affects people, people of all ages have shown to be susceptible to COVID-19. Older persons and persons with pre-existing medical conditions (such as high blood pressure, heart disease, lung disease, cancer, chronic kidney disease, or diabetes) appear to develop serious illness more often than others.

#### **Are there any medicines or therapies that can prevent or cure COVID-19?**

While some western, traditional or home remedies may provide comfort and alleviate symptoms of COVID-19, there is no evidence that current medicine can prevent or cure the disease. WHO does not recommend self-medication with any medicines, including antibiotics, as a prevention or cure for COVID-19. However, there are several ongoing clinical trials that include both western and traditional medicines.

#### **Are antibiotics effective in preventing or treating the COVID-19?**

No. Antibiotics do not work against viruses, they only work on bacterial infections. Antibiotics should not be used as a means of prevention or treatment of COVID-19. They should only be used as directed by a physician to treat a bacterial infection.

#### **Is there a vaccine, drug or treatment for COVID-19?**

Not yet. To date, there is no vaccine and no specific antiviral medicine to prevent or treat COVID-2019. Possible vaccines and some specific drug treatments are under investigation and are being tested through clinical trials. WHO is coordinating efforts to develop vaccines and medicines to prevent and treat COVID-19. The most effective ways to protect yourself and others against COVID-19 are to frequently clean your hands, cover your cough with your elbow or tissue.

#### **What is the MTA doing to help ensure social distance in workspaces?**

The MTA Essential Service Plan helps provide critical flexibility in scheduling as fewer crews are needed to operate the current service plan, and fewer people coming in will help alleviate crowding. We are creating extra space for employees to sit in and spread out. Employees can also choose to be outside or find other places nearby, if available. Remember, if you feel sick, stay home. We all have an obligation to

do our part to protect public health. NYCT Subways has made office trains available for crews so they don't need to be confined in small crew rooms. Where possible, office trains are parked on unused tracks at terminals. Some divisions, including Car Equipment, MOW Track and others, are implementing rotational schedules where crews are divided into groups and rotate assignments so that not everyone is in one facility at the same time.

**Should I wear a mask to protect myself?**

When it comes to wearing gear such as masks and gloves, there is a nationwide shortage and New York State is working around the clock to secure additional supplies, including hiring companies in New York to manufacture them. It's important to note, these items are not recommended by the CDC as protection against COVID-19; however employees may choose to wear them. Subways is distributing 50,000 masks.

**I understand that masks are not recommended, but can I wear a mask and gloves if I want to?**

Yes.

**Will I be allowed to wear a mask if I have asthma or some other medical condition?**

Yes. If you have an underlying medical condition which would otherwise make wearing a mask appropriate, it is permitted. If you have such a medical condition, please consult your physician and contact your appropriate Human Resources or Labor Relations representative about requesting an accommodation.

**How long is the incubation period for COVID-19?**

The "incubation period" means the time between catching the virus and beginning to have symptoms of the disease. Most estimates of the incubation period for COVID-19 range from 1-14 days, most commonly around five days.

**What if an employee was first quarantined, and then later is diagnosed with COVID-19?**

Under those circumstances, the employee would follow the same guidance noted above for a positive COVID-19 diagnosis. However, an employee is entitled to a maximum of fourteen (14) calendar days of the administrative leave for both quarantine and diagnosis. All time beyond the fourteen (14) calendar days (the equivalent of 10 working days) of leave will be paid as sick leave. Similarly, this time will not be enforced as occurrences under the terms of the Attendance Policy.

**Can I catch COVID-19 from my pet?**

While there has been one instance of a dog being infected in Hong Kong, to date, there is no evidence that a dog, cat or any pet can transmit COVID-19. COVID-19 is mainly spread through droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or speaks. To protect yourself, clean your hands frequently and thoroughly. WHO continues to monitor the latest research on this and other COVID-19 topics and will update as new findings are available.

**How long does the virus survive on surfaces?**

It is not certain how long the virus that causes COVID-19 survives on surfaces, but it seems to behave like other coronaviruses. On the other hand, according to the CDC, transmission of novel coronavirus to persons from surfaces contaminated with the virus has not been documented. Transmission of coronavirus occurs much more commonly through respiratory droplets than through fomites. Current evidence suggests that novel coronavirus may remain viable for hours to days on surfaces made from a variety of materials. Cleaning of visibly dirty surfaces followed by disinfection is a best

practice measure for prevention of COVID-19 and other viral respiratory illnesses in households and community settings. If you think a surface may be infected, clean it with simple disinfectant to kill the virus and protect yourself and others. Clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water. Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, or nose.

**Is it safe to receive a package from any area where COVID-19 has been reported?**

Yes. The likelihood of an infected person contaminating commercial goods is low and the risk of catching the virus that causes COVID-19 from a package that has been moved, travelled, and exposed to different conditions and temperature is also low.

**What are reliable sources for information pertaining to COVID-19?**

As this situation is rapidly changing, it is very important to stay informed. All employees are advised to continually consult federal, state and city agency websites for reliable information. These include:

- CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>),
  - New York State Department of Health (<https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus>)
  - New York City Health Department (<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/providers/health-topics/novel-respiratory-viruses.page>)
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