

# COVID-19/Novel Coronavirus



## 2019 Novel Coronavirus

Coronaviruses are common viruses that cause upper respiratory symptoms like throat discomfort, followed by sneezing, runny nose, nasal congestion, coughing and decreased energy level. There are many

different strands of coronaviruses that can cause the common cold and pneumonia. It is a common family of viruses that causes us to be sick! Currently there is an outbreak of one specific strand of coronavirus called 2019 novel coronavirus (2019- nCoV). It is called this because it is a new strand that has recently been identified. This specific strand of coronavirus has been in the news and is being monitored as an outbreak in China. The 2019 novel coronavirus is a virus that is transmitted from person to person through contact and being close to an infected person who coughs and sneezes.

## Symptoms

People with COVID-19 have a wide range of symptoms that range from mild to moderate but may include –

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Chills
- New loss of taste or smell
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Fatigue
- Congestion
- Nausea, vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Runny nose

COVID-19 can cause a mild to moderate illness, but can be fatal and is expected to be the worst for the elderly and those with other chronic health conditions. Symptoms are expected to

appear 2-14 days after being infected. Some may not experience any symptoms at all, but could infect others, which is why it is important to create that social distance between yourself and others.

Older adults and those with underlying health conditions seem to be at higher risk of developing more serious complications from COVID-19. However, everyone is at risk and should remain cautious.

The CDC has developed guidelines for who can be tested, which are used by state health departments to determine testing eligibility. Testing someone before they show symptoms start to show can give a negative result, but that could be a false negative if it was too early after becoming infected, then could then unknowingly infect others if they think they are not infected. This is why testing criteria is put into place and a person who has had possible exposure must self-quarantine for 14 days.

## **Social Distancing**

- Social distancing is a practice that keeps yourself at a distance from others. Social distancing helps prevent the spread of any virus, especially because someone may not know they are ill or not experiencing symptoms.
- If you are in public or around others, keep a distance (at least 6 feet) between yourself and others.
- Stay home and avoid unnecessary trips outside the home, especially when you are experiencing symptoms or are sick.
- If you or someone in your household is positive or you have had direct contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, you should self-quarantine in your home for 14 days after the contact date to avoid spreading the illness to others. Symptoms can appear anytime 14 days after contact so it is important to quarantine to watch for these symptoms if you may have been exposed.
- Wash your hands frequently for 20 seconds with warm water and soap. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol
- Clean and disinfect frequently used items daily such as your phone, vehicle, kitchen, bathroom, door handles, light switches, etc.
- If you wear personal protective gear such as gloves and a mask, make sure you are removing them properly, throwing them away in the trash can and washing your hands after removal
- CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies), when you are around others that are not in your household, when you are sick and when someone may be sick in your household.

# Contact Investigation

After a positive case of COVID-19 is confirmed, the Macon County Health Department will conduct a contact investigation to determine where that person was and who was at risk of being exposed to COVID-19. Contact investigations are required under Missouri state statute 19 CSR 20-20.020 for any reportable disease including COVID-19.

A contact investigation process is this: after a positive case is confirmed, the health department will interview the infected person to collect information on where they have been and people with whom they have been in contact. The timeline for the contact investigation begins on the date the person started showing symptoms of the virus.

The Health Department will contact every person the infected patient has been in direct contact with since starting to show symptoms. Direct contact is considered as –

1. Being closer than 6 feet for 15 minutes or more over a 24 hour period, including but not limited to caring for, living with, visiting or sharing a healthcare waiting area with an infected person.
2. Having direct contact with respiratory droplets from the infected person, such as being coughed on.

We cannot disclose the identity of the positive person due to HIPAA privacy laws.

We will let the direct contacts know they have been exposed and what symptoms to watch for – including fever, cough and shortness of breath. The direct contact will be asked to self-quarantine for 14 days and to watch for symptoms. If they begin to show symptoms, they are asked to call their primary health care provider or the Macon County Health Department for further instruction.

If a person does not answer a call, we cannot leave information on voicemails other than asking them to call the Macon County Health Department, again due to privacy laws.

We will only ask the person who had direct contact to self-quarantine, not indirect contacts which include second- or third-degree contacts. If someone is worried that they may have been exposed, they can self-quarantine as a precaution.

**You can find more information in regards to COVID-19 at [Macon County Health Department](#) and the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).**