

CORONAVIRUS WHAT SHOULD I KNOW?

ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING COVID-19

MARCH 2020

WHAT IS CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19)?

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) identified in an outbreak in Wuhan, China. Rarely animal coronaviruses infect people and spread as was seen with MERS-CoV, SARS-CoV, and now with SARS-CoV-2. Bats have been identified as the origin of all three viruses.

HOW DOES COVID-19 SPREAD?



It spreads mainly **person-to-person**: close contact of about 6 feet through respiratory droplets and potentially aerosol when an infected person coughs or sneezes.



Contact with **contaminated surfaces or objects** and then touching one's nose, eyes, or mouth can also spread the disease.

COVID-19 SYMPTOMS:

Respiratory symptoms that vary from **mild to severe**, and in some cases fatal, have been reported. Some of the most commonly reported symptoms are:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Sore throat

Pneumonia apparent in chest imaging seems to be the most common complication.

INCUBATION PERIOD:

The incubation period for COVID-19 is thought to be **2-14 days**, more commonly around 5 days, as seen with other coronaviruses.

Most cases show mild symptoms.

Asymptomatic cases have been reported and could play an **important role in transmission.**

HOW IS IT DIAGNOSED?

At the time of publication, Puerto Rico does not have laboratories available to complete the diagnostic test known as **RT-PCR**. Currently, diagnostic tests are being **sent to CDC laboratories** and are also being completed in other labs in the United States. A positive SARS-CoV-2 test confirms **COVID-19**.

IS THERE A VACCINE OR TREATMENT AVAILABLE?

No FDA-approved antiviral medications are available to treat COVID-19, and the vaccine is currently under development. Antiretrovirals and antimalarial medications are being studied for treatment. The use of corticosteroids should be avoided unless medically indicated for another reason, as they may prolong viral replication, as seen in patients with MERS-CoV.

CAN A PERSON WITH COVID-19 TRANSMIT IT TO OTHERS?

Yes, that is why CDC recommends that **patients should be isolated**, either at home or in a hospital (depending on symptom severity) until their symptoms resolve or they do not present a risk for transmission. Once a person is released from isolation, they are not considered a risk of transmission to others. The decision to end isolation is evaluated on a case-by-case basis by healthcare professionals taking into consideration specific facts from each case.

The CDC recommends **ending isolation** if the person meets all the following criteria:

- The patient **does not have a fever** without the use of fever-reducing medication.
- The patient **does not present symptoms**, especially cough.
- The patient has **two negative tests** from respiratory specimens taken at least 24 hours apart.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES RECOMMENDED BY THE CDC:

The most efficient way to protect yourself is by avoiding contact with the virus:

- **Stay home when you are sick.**
- **Cover your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue** when you cough or sneeze and throw it away promptly.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- Avoid touching your mouth, nose, and eyes.
- **Clean and disinfect** frequently used objects and surfaces.
- **Wash your hands frequently** with water and soap for **at least 20 seconds**, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, and after blowing your nose, sneezing, or coughing.
- If water and soap are not available, use an **alcohol-based hand disinfectant** that is at least **60% alcohol**.

The CDC and OMS recommend that **face masks be used only by symptomatic patients** to prevent transmitting the disease to others, **by caregivers, and health care professionals. Face masks are not recommended for healthy individuals** to protect themselves from respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19. If face masks are

used, it is of the utmost importance that they are used correctly and disposed of adequately to prevent increasing the risk of transmission through incorrect use and disposal.

WHAT MEASURES SHOULD YOU TAKE WHEN A PATIENT PRESENTS SYMPTOMS OF A RESPIRATORY INFECTION AT THE PHARMACY?

- Clean and disinfect the pharmacy counter routinely.
- Have available for patient use: alcohol-based hand disinfectant (at least 60%), disposable tissues and trashcans that do not require touch for use.
- Counsel patients about preventive measures recommended by the CDC mentioned above.
- Do not allow symptomatic patients to wait with other patients in the pharmacy; provide them with a disposable mask; and refer them to a physician for evaluation.
- Place educational posters in strategic areas in the pharmacy waiting room.
- Pharmacy personnel should practice hand hygiene with alcohol-based hand disinfectant before and after patient contact.



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