



A GUIDE TO CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

What is it?

COVID-19 is a new illness that can affect your lungs and airways.

It's caused by a virus called coronavirus. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses with some causing less severe disease, such as the common cold, and others causing more severe disease.

On 31 December 2019, World Health Organization was informed of a cluster of cases of pneumonia detected in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China. A new coronavirus was identified and named SARS-CoV-2.

How is it transmitted?

The government has stated: 'We do not know the routes of transmission of COVID-19; however, other coronaviruses are mainly transmitted by large respiratory droplets and direct or indirect contact with infected secretions. In addition to respiratory secretions, other coronaviruses have been detected in blood, faeces and urine.'

COVID-19 can enter your body when you breathe it in (after someone coughs nearby or you touch a contaminated surface).

Can you recover from COVID-19?

People can be infected with COVID-19 and never develop symptoms or have only mild symptoms which they can recover from. For other people COVID-19 could be fatal.

The time between infection and having symptoms is on average five days. It first infects the cells lining your throat, airways and lungs. The immune system kicks in to fight the virus, which can result in the body feeling body aches, pain and fever. This as well as a cough, can be treated with drinking fluids, taking paracetamol and bed rest.

After seven days, if you have not recovered, your body may be struggling to cope with COVID-19. Dr Nathalie MacDermott, from King's College London has said if the disease progresses, it is because the immune system is overreacting to the virus, creating too much inflammation.

Inflammation of the lungs is known as pneumonia. Pneumonia causes the small air sacs in the lungs to start to fill with water. This can cause shortness of breath and difficulty breathing. Some people will need a ventilator to help them breathe.

Inflammation can damage the body and lead to septic shock when the blood pressure falls to extremely low levels and organs stop working. Inflammation of the the lungs can cause acute respiratory distress syndrome, which can stop the body getting enough oxygen it needs to survive.



How do I keep safe?

- Wash hands for 20 seconds with soap and hot water or use hand sanitiser gel.
- Use a tissue for coughs and sneezes or if you don't have one use your sleeve.
- Throw the tissue away immediately and then wash your hands.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- The government says everyone should avoid 'non-essential' contact with other people and keep a two-metre distance from other people if they leave the house.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

The most common symptoms are:

- a high temperature of 37.8 degrees Celsius or above.
- a new, continuous dry cough.
- From 18th May 2020, anosmia was officially recognised as one of the key symptoms of COVID-19, alongside a fever and a continuous cough. Anosmia is when you sense of smell changes or disappears altogether.

(If you are not able to measure your temperature, check to see if you feel hot to touch on your chest or your back.)

What should I do if I have these symptoms?

Testing for COVID-19 is not being carried out on everyone who has symptoms including those self-isolating at home.

- If you live alone and you have either a high temperature or a new continuous cough, however mild, stay at home for 7 days from when your symptoms started.
- If you live with others and you or one of them have symptoms of coronavirus, then all household members must stay at home and not leave the house for 14 days. The 14-day period starts from the day when the first person in the house became ill.
- While in isolation at home, remain away from others in the house and do not share towels, etc.
- If your symptoms worsen or you are no better after 7 days, use the online 111.nhs.uk service. If you do not have internet access, call NHS 111.



How can I test for COVID-19?

From 18th May 2020, you can apply to be tested for COVID-19 if you show one or more of the three most common symptoms. Ideally, you should take the test within five days of your symptoms starting.

The test is a mouth swab that will either be sent to you to do at home or done by a nurse at a drive-through test centre.

To apply for a COVID-19 test [click here](#).