



Durham Region Health Department **Facts about...**



Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

What is it?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that cause illnesses in humans ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases. Human coronaviruses are common throughout the world. There are seven known coronaviruses that can infect people and make them sick. Examples include Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). Most recently, a novel (new) coronavirus (COVID-19) was identified based on a cluster of respiratory illnesses in Wuhan, China.

In some cases, illness caused by COVID-19 can be mild. In more severe cases, COVID-19 can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome and kidney failure.

How is it spread?

COVID-19 can spread from person to person through:

- Close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands.
- Contact with nose and throat secretions (e.g., coughing and sneezing).
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes before washing your hands.

What do I look for?

Signs and symptoms of COVID-19 may include fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. Currently, people who have travelled outside of Canada within 14 days of having symptoms or people who have been in close contact with a person who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 may be at risk.

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If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.



How is it treated?

There is no specific treatment for COVID-19. Supportive care based on symptoms may be helpful. Currently there is no vaccine for COVID-19.

How can I protect myself?

Standard practices to prevent exposure and transmission of a range of illnesses should be followed. These practices include:

- Frequent and thorough handwashing with soap and water or use of hand sanitizer when hands are not visibly dirty.
- Coughing or sneezing into your sleeve or elbow and encouraging others to do the same.
- Washing your hands after handling nose and throat secretions (e.g., after throwing out used facial tissues).
- Avoid touching your face and clean hands before touching eyes, nose or mouth.
- Cleaning and disinfecting surfaces, especially those that are high touch areas.
- Do not share water bottles, straws, eating utensils, cigarettes, toothbrushes, toys or anything else that has been in contact with saliva, nose or throat secretions.
- If you are ill, stay at home and isolate yourself from others.
- Avoid close contact with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness such as coughing and sneezing.

If you are concerned about symptoms, contact your health care provider or Durham Region Health Department and wear a mask when attending medical appointments.

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