

What is COVID-19 and Infection Prevention

COVID-19

[Coronaviruses](#) are a large family of viruses. Some cause illness in people and others cause illness in animals. Human coronaviruses are common and are typically associated with mild illnesses, similar to the common cold.

COVID-19 is a new disease that has not been previously identified in humans. Rarely, animal coronaviruses can infect people, and more rarely, these can then spread from person to person through close contact.

There have been two other specific coronaviruses that have spread from animals to humans and which have caused severe illness in humans. These are the:

1. [Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus \(SARS CoV\)](#)
2. [Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus \(MERS CoV\)](#)

Those who are infected with COVID-19 may have little to no symptoms. You may not know you have symptoms of COVID-19 because they are similar to a cold or flu.

Symptoms have included:

- cough,
- fever,
- difficulty breathing, and
- pneumonia in both lungs.

In severe cases, infection can lead to death. Symptoms may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to COVID-19. This is the longest known incubation period for this disease.

Recent evidence indicates that the virus can be transmitted to others from someone who is infected but not showing symptoms. This includes people who:

- have not yet developed symptoms (pre-symptomatic) and
- never develop symptoms (asymptomatic)

While experts know that these kinds of transmissions are happening among those in close contact or in close physical settings, it is not known to what extent. This means it is extremely important to follow the proven [preventative measures](#).



Preventative Measures

Canadians should continue to think ahead about the actions they can take to stay healthy and prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Canada. This includes **staying at home** as much as possible and [being prepared](#) in case you or a family member becomes ill. Everyone should be practising **physical (social) distancing**. Even if you do not have symptoms of COVID-19, you could become infected by others.

As we continue to see transmission of the virus within different communities, we know that everyone must take precautions, even those who have not travelled outside of Canada.

In an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19 within communities and across the country, all Canadians are advised to:

- Stay at home unless you have to go to work. Talk to your employer about working at home if possible.
- Avoid all non-essential trips in your community.
- Do not gather in groups. Respect Government of Ontario directives.
- Limit contact with people at higher risk, such as older adults and those in poor health.
- Go outside to exercise but stay close to home.
- If you leave your home, always keep a distance of at least two (2) meters (6 feet) from others. Household contacts (people you live with) do not need to distance from each other unless they are sick.

2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) What you need to know to help you and your family stay healthy



Wash your hands with soap and water thoroughly and often.

Cough and sneeze into your sleeve or a tissue. Dispose of tissue immediately and wash your hands.



Keep surfaces clean and disinfected.

Stay home when you are sick.



If you have symptoms, call Telehealth Ontario at:
1-866-797-0000
TTY: 1-866-797-0007
Or contact your public health unit.

For more information,
visit [Ontario.ca/coronavirus](https://www.ontario.ca/coronavirus)

Ontario 

You can go outside if you:

- Have not been diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Do not have symptoms of COVID-19.
- Have not travelled outside of Canada in the past 14 days.
- Are not in quarantine (self-isolating).



If you go out for a walk, do not congregate and always practise physical (social) distancing by keeping at least two (2) metres (6 feet) apart from others at all times.

Physical (social) distancing

Together, we can slow the spread of COVID-19 by making a conscious effort to keep a physical distance between each other. [Physical \(social\) distancing](#) is proven to be one of the most effective ways to reduce the spread of illness during an outbreak.

This means making changes in your everyday routines to minimize close contact with others, including:

- Avoiding crowded places and non-essential gatherings.
- Avoiding common greetings, such as handshakes.
- Limiting contact with people at higher risk like older adults and those in poor health.
- Keeping a distance of at least two (2) meters from others (6 feet).

Hygiene

Proper hygiene can help reduce the risk of infection or spreading infection to others:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after using the washroom and when preparing food. Use alcohol-based [hand sanitizer](#) if soap and water are not available.
- When coughing or sneezing, cough or sneeze into a tissue or the bend of your arm, not your hand. Dispose of any tissues you have used as soon as possible in a lined wastebasket and wash your hands afterwards. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.



Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

How to wash your hands



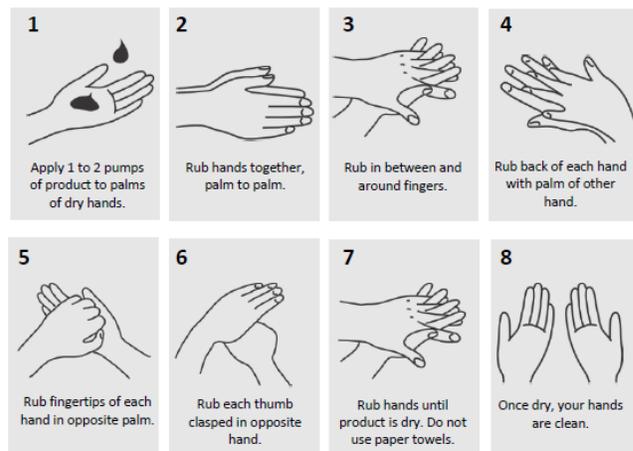
Wash hands for
at least 15 seconds



How to use hand sanitizer



Rub hands for
at least 15 seconds



Cleaning

Coronaviruses are one of the easiest types of viruses to kill with the appropriate disinfectant product when used according to the label directions. Health Canada has published a [list of hard surface disinfectants](#) that are likely to be effective for use against COVID-19.

Although they do not claim to kill COVID-19, cleaners can play a role in limiting the transfer of microorganisms. Health Canada recommends cleaning high-touch hard surfaces often, using either regular household cleaners or diluted bleach according to the label directions. This bleach solution should be prepared according to the instructions on the label or in a ratio of 250 mL (1 cup) of water per 5 mL (1 teaspoon) of bleach. Directions are based on bleach that is 5% sodium hypochlorite, to give a 0.1% sodium hypochlorite solution. Never mix bleach with other chemical products and use it in a well-ventilated area. [Special precautions](#) must be used when cleaning with bleach to avoid serious incidents.

