

HEALTHCARE BULLETIN (March 2020)

Advanced Primary Care – Coronavirus (COVID-19)



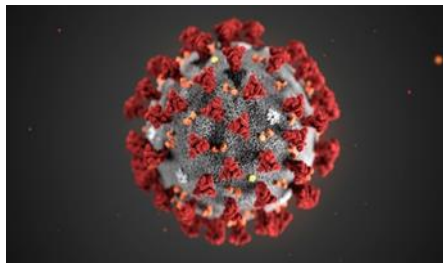
By Dr. Mary Szabo

Introduction

Since the outbreaks of respiratory illness (COVID-19) in Wuhan, China in January of 2020, COVID-19 has spread to all continents except Antarctica, with more than 90,000 confirmed cases and more than 3,000 deaths globally. To date, Canada has a total of 51 confirmed and presumptive cases of COVID-19 with all involved individuals contracted through travel. While the risk of COVID-19 remains low in Canada for now, it is inevitable that the disease will spread.

Canada's first apparent "community case" of COVID-19 was reported recently, involving a Vancouver-area woman who recently caught the virus without having been out of the country. Health officials are tracking the source of infection.

A community case indicates that the virus was passed within a community, rather than contracted through travel.



What is COVID -19?

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by a novel, new type of coronavirus. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in humans and many different species of animals, including camels, cattle, cats and bats. Rarely, animal coronaviruses can infect people and then spread between people such as SARS, MERS and now the new one COVID-19.

How does COVID-19 spread?

Human to human transmission of COVID-19 occurs when people are in **close contact** with each other (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

Can someone spread the virus without being sick?

People are most contagious when they are sickest, therefore people should stay at home when they are sick to prevent spreading the infection to others.

Some spread might be possible before people show symptoms; but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

Can COVID-19 spread from contact with infected surfaces or objects?

It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has been contaminated with the virus and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

How easily is COVID-19 spread?

The virus that causes COVID-19 seems to be spreading easily and sustainably in the community. How easily a virus spreads from person-to-person can vary. Some viruses are highly contagious like measles, while other viruses do not spread as easily. Another factor is whether the spread is sustained, spreading continually without stopping. Hence it is important to stay home if you are sick to prevent spreading the disease to others.

How severe is COVID -19 infection?

Infection with COVID-19 ranges from mild symptoms to severe illness and death. It is important to note majority infected with COVID-19 recovers from the illness.

Younger people tend to have milder illness while people with other medical conditions and older individuals (age >60) tend to have more severe infection and death.

How do I know I have been infected with COVID-19?

Watch for symptoms

Most people infected with COVID -19 have symptoms. The following symptoms usually appear 2-14 days after exposure.

- Fever - any body temperature above the normal of 98.6 F (37 C), in practice a person is usually not considered to have a significant fever until the temperature is above 100.4 F or 38.0 C.
- Cough, dry or productive.
- Difficulty breathing.

Call APC and talk to our clinical team for advice if you:

Develop **symptoms and/or have been in close contact** with a person known to have COVID-19.

OR

Have **recently traveled from an area** with [widespread or ongoing community spread of COVID-19](#).

Is there treatment or vaccine for COVID-19?

Currently there is no vaccine nor treatment for COVID-19 though researchers are currently conducting study on drugs and vaccines which look promising.

What can I do to prevent myself from getting the infection?

The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. Everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases includes:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (enough time to sing happy birthday twice), especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

For information about handwashing, see [CDC's Handwashing](#) website

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.

Should I use a face mask to protect myself from getting infected?

We do not recommend people in the community who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.

Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others.

The use of facemasks is for [health workers](#) and [people who are taking care of someone in close settings](#) (at home or in a health care facility)

What should I do if I have been exposed to someone who is confirmed with COVID-19 or I just return from countries with confirmed cases of COVID-19?

Self- observation means people should remain alert for subjective fever, cough, or difficulty breathing. If you feel feverish or develop cough or difficult breathing, you should take your temperature, limit contact with others and seek medical health advice from your APC care team or health- link (811) to determine whether medical evaluation is needed.

Self- monitoring means people should monitor themselves for fever by taking their temperature twice daily and remained alert for cough and difficult breathing. Seek prompt medical attention if your illness is worsening contact our clinical team or Health Link.

What is isolation vs quarantine?

Isolation- separates sick people with a contagious disease from people who are not sick.

Quarantine- separate and restrict the movement of people who were exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick.

What should I do if I am are sick with (COVID-19)?



Stay home

People who are mildly ill with COVID-19 should isolate themselves at home during their illness. You should restrict activities outside your home, except for getting medical care.

- **Avoid public areas:** Do not go to work, school, or public areas.
- **Avoid public transportation:** Avoid using public transportation, share ride or taxis.



Stay away from others

- As much as possible, you should stay in a specific room and away from other people in your home. Also, you should use a separate bathroom, if available.
- **Limit contact with pets & animals:** You should restrict contact with pets and other animals while you are sick with COVID-19, just like you would around other people. Although there have not been reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19, it is still recommended that people sick with COVID-19 limit contact with animals until more information is known about the virus.

When possible, have another member of your household care for your animals while you are sick. If you are sick with COVID-19, avoid contact with your pet, including petting, snuggling, being kissed or licked, and sharing food. If you must care for your pet or be around animals while you are sick, wash your hands before and after you interact with pets and wear a face mask.



Call ahead

If you have a medical appointment, call ahead before visiting your doctor and inform us that you have or may have COVID-19. This will help our APC medical team to take steps to keep other people from getting infected or exposed.

Wear a facemask if you are sick



- **If you are sick:** You should wear a facemask when you are around other people (e.g., sharing a room or vehicle) or pets and before you enter a healthcare provider's office.
- **If you are caring for others:** If the person who is sick is not able to wear a facemask (for example, because it causes trouble breathing), then people who live with the person who is sick should not stay in the same room with them, or they should wear a facemask if they enter a room with the person who is sick.

Cover your coughs and sneezes

Cover: Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.



- **Dispose:** Throw used tissues in a lined trash can.
- **Wash hands:** Immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or, if soap and water are not available, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel



Clean your hands often

- **Wash hands:** Wash your hands often with soap and water especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.
- **Hand sanitizer:** If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- **Soap and water:** Soap and water are the best option if hands are visibly dirty.
- **Avoid touching:** Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.



Avoid sharing personal household items

- **Do not share:** You should not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people or pets in your home.
- **Wash thoroughly after use:** After using these items, they should be washed thoroughly with soap and water.



Clean all “high-touch” surfaces everyday

- **Clean and disinfect:** All high touch surfaces include counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables.
- **Disinfect areas with bodily fluids:** Also, clean any surfaces that may have blood, stool, or body fluids on them.
- **Household cleaners:** Use a household cleaning spray or wipe, according to the label instructions. Labels contain instructions for safe and effective use of the cleaning product including precautions

you should take when applying the product, such as wearing gloves and making sure you have good ventilation during use of the product.

Stigma and Resilience

Public health emergencies, such as the outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), are stressful times for people and communities. Fear and anxiety about a disease can lead to social **stigma** toward people, places, or things.

Stigma and discrimination can occur when people associate a disease, such as COVID-19, with a population or nationality, even though not everyone in that population or from that region is specifically at risk for the disease.

It is important to remember that people – including those of Asian descent – who do not live in or have not recently been in an area of ongoing spread of the virus that causes COVID-19, or have not been in contact with a person who is a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 are **not** at greater risk of spreading COVID-19 than other Canadians.

Stigma affects the emotional or **mental health** of stigmatized groups and the communities they live. Stopping stigma is important to making communities and community members **resilient**.

All of us at APC are committed to supporting our patients during this difficult period in our community. We will continue to provide the highest standard of care possible and will remain vigilant in our efforts to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Your APC Healthcare Team

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