



A Union of Professionals

COVID-19 Resources

The Basics

MARCH 20, 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic is in full swing. We don't know the extent of its ultimate impact, but it will continue to be a health as well as economic disrupter for some time. It's important to understand the basics so you can take action to protect yourself, your family, your colleagues and community.

Transmission and Symptoms

- COVID-19 can be transmitted by:
 - Large droplets (sneezes and coughs from close bystanders) that can land on the mucous membranes of your nose, eyes and mouth;
 - Contact, e.g., touching objects contaminated by splashes and then touching your nose, mouth or eyes; and
 - Quite possibly by airborne particles that remain suspended in the air within the proximity of infected people.
- COVID-19 is passed by close contact. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines close contact as being within approximately six feet for a prolonged period. Examples of close contact with an infected person for a prolonged period include sitting in a waiting room or sharing a car ride.
- It appears that infection is more prevalent in adults than children. However, infants and toddlers may have an increased risk. Elderly people and those with underlying or predisposing conditions such as heart disease, diabetes and cancer are more vulnerable to the viral illness.

- The following symptoms, as identified by the CDC, may appear two-14 days after exposure.
 - Fever
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - Thus far, the coronavirus has not been associated with upper respiratory symptoms—runny noses and sneezing.

Infected individuals may be asymptomatic or display very few symptoms for as long as seven days but can still shed the virus.

If you are at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19 because of your age or because you have a serious long-term health problem, it is extra important for you to take actions to reduce your risk of getting sick with the disease.

- Stock up on supplies.
- Take everyday precautions to practice social distancing—keep space between yourself and others.
- When you go out in public, keep away from others who are sick, limit close contact, and wash your hands often.
- Avoid crowds as much as possible.
- Avoid cruise travel and non-essential air travel.

Find these resources and more at www.aft.org/coronavirus

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of 1.7 million professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

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- If you develop troubling symptoms, including but not limited to:
 - Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath,
 - Persistent pain or pressure in the chest,
 - New confusion or inability to arouse,
 - Bluish lips or face.

Immediately consult your health provider to get advice on next care steps, including possible testing. Do not go to an emergency room unless directed to do so by your provider.

What to do if you get sick?

- Stay home.
- Call your healthcare provider and describe your symptoms in detail. Follow the provider's advice.
- You may be able to recover at home. Follow CDC instructions for how to take care of yourself at home
- Get medical attention immediately if you have any of the emergency warning signs listed above.

What to expect during the pandemic:

- It is important to follow your local government emergency declarations, which in all probability will include:
 - School and college closures (weeks to months);
 - Restaurant, bar and other closures; and
 - Social distancing recommendations.
- Your state or local government may require you to "shelter in place" in your home for extended periods.
- And don't forget to practice the standard public health advice every day:
 - Frequent hand washing and use of hand sanitizer;
 - Cough and sneeze hygiene (covering your cough with tissue or coughing/sneezing into your elbow; and
 - Frequent cleaning and disinfection of household surfaces and workspaces.

For more information, contact Amy Bahruth in the AFT Health Issues Department at 202-879-4731 or abahruth@aft.org

AFT COVID-19 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Adapted from CDC

WHAT IS A NOVEL CORONAVIRUS?

There are hundreds of coronaviruses that we come in contact with—some can cause the common cold but most are harmless. However, the (SARS CoV-2) is a newly identified coronavirus referred to as “novel.” It is of great concern because it is easily transmitted and can cause a serious illness, COVID-19, in vulnerable individuals.

WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF THE VIRUS?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Some cause illness in people; others (such as canine and feline coronaviruses) only infect animals. Rarely, coronaviruses that infect animals have emerged to infect people and can spread between people. This is suspected to have occurred for the virus that causes COVID-19. Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) are two other examples of coronaviruses that originated from animals and then spread to people.

CAN SOMEONE WHO HAS HAD COVID-19 SPREAD THE ILLNESS TO OTHERS?

The virus that causes COVID-19 is spreading from person-to-person. Someone who is infected with the virus and/or actively sick with COVID-19 can spread the illness to others. That is why CDC recommends that these patients be isolated—either in the hospital or at home, depending on how sick they are—until they are better and no longer pose a risk of infecting others. How long someone is actively sick can vary, so the decision on when to release someone from isolation is made on a case-by-case basis in consultation with doctors, infection prevention and control experts, and public health officials; they consider the specifics of each situation, including disease severity, illness signs and symptoms, and results of laboratory testing for that patient.

WHO SHOULD BE TESTED FOR COVID-19?

If you develop symptoms such as fever, cough and/or difficulty breathing, and have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19 or have recently traveled from an area with ongoing

spread of COVID-19, stay home and call your healthcare provider. Older patients and individuals who have severe underlying medical conditions or are immunocompromised should contact their healthcare provider early, even if their illness is mild. If you have severe symptoms, such as persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion or inability to arouse, or bluish lips or face, contact your healthcare provider or emergency room and seek care immediately. Your doctor will determine if you have signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and whether you should be tested.

WILL WARM WEATHER STOP THE OUTBREAK OF COVID-19?:

It is not yet known whether weather and temperature impact the spread of COVID-19. At this time, it is not known whether the spread will decrease when weather becomes warmer. Some other viruses, like the common cold and flu, spread more during cold-weather months, but that does not mean it is impossible to become sick with these viruses during other months. There is much more to learn about the transmissibility, severity and other features associated with COVID-19; investigations are ongoing.

WHY MIGHT SOMEONE BLAME OR AVOID INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS (CREATE STIGMA) BECAUSE OF COVID-19?

People in the U.S. may be worried or anxious about friends and relatives who are living in or visiting areas where COVID-19 is spreading. Some people are worried about the disease itself. Fear and anxiety can lead to social stigma, for example, toward Chinese or other Asian Americans or people who were in quarantine. Stigma hurts everyone by creating more fear or anger toward ordinary people instead of the disease that is causing the problem. People can fight stigma and help, not hurt, others by providing social support. Counter stigma by learning and sharing facts. Communicating the facts that viruses do not target specific racial or ethnic groups and how COVID-19 actually spreads can help stop stigma.