

*What you need to know about . . .*

# COVID-19

## Know the Risks

A **coronavirus** is one of a large group of viruses that can cause illness in animals and humans. Most viruses in this group cause upper respiratory symptoms, such as cough and runny nose. Some types of coronavirus can cause more severe symptoms.

**Novel (new) coronavirus** is a new virus that first appeared in humans in Wuhan, China in 2019. This new virus causes **Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)**. Symptoms of **COVID-19** include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Symptoms can appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus.

Any person can develop COVID-19 after being exposed to novel coronavirus. Based upon available information, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has identified people with the following conditions as being at higher risk of developing more severe symptoms:

- People aged 65 years and older
- People who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility
- Other high-risk conditions could include:
  - People with chronic breathing problems, such as COPD or asthma
  - People who have heart disease with complications
  - People who are *immunocompromised*\* including cancer treatment
  - People of any age with severe obesity (body mass index  $\geq 40$ ) or certain underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled, such as those with diabetes, renal failure, or liver disease might also be at risk
- Women who are pregnant should be monitored since they are known to be at risk with severe viral illness, however, to date data on COVID-19 has not shown increased risk

\*Many conditions can cause a person to be immunocompromised, including cancer treatment, bone marrow or organ transplantation, immune deficiencies, poorly controlled HIV or AIDS, and prolonged use of corticosteroids and other immune weakening medications.

People can catch this new coronavirus and spread the virus to others *before showing any signs of the illness*.

# Know the Signs

Symptoms can be mild or severe. The three main symptoms of COVID-19 are:

- **Fever**
- **Cough**
- **Shortness of Breath**

These symptoms can appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus.

**For individuals who have difficulty communicating**, supporters should watch for fever and cough and seek medical attention when those symptoms appear. **Don't wait for all three signs.** Remember that individuals who cannot communicate well might not be able to tell you they are experiencing shortness of breath.

Know what to do

## **EVERYONE should:**

- Wash your hands frequently. Use soap and water and wash for at least 20 seconds, especially after you have been in a public place or have coughed or sneezed.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- Put distance between yourself and other people. Avoid crowded places.
- Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces. This includes phones and keyboards.

## **IF YOU ARE SICK:**

- Stay home if you are sick. If you must go out, avoid public transportation.
- Cover coughs and sneezes. Do not re-use tissues. Throw used tissues away.
- Wash your hands after you cough or sneeze.
- Separate yourself from other people in your home.
- Call ahead before visiting your doctor. Follow your doctor's instructions carefully. Only go to a doctor's office or hospital when instructed to do so.
- Monitor your symptoms.
- Do not share personal household items (towels, dishes, utensils, bedding, etc.)
- Wear a mask if your doctor tells you to.

## **IN AN EMERGENCY**

**Call 9-1-1 immediately if a person in your care:**

- Appears to have difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- High fever, possibly with chills
- Has persistent pain or feeling of pressure in the chest
- Is confused or difficult to arouse
- Has bluish color to lips or face
- Has any other severe or concerning symptoms

**BECAUSE COVID-19 IS A NEW DISEASE AND WE ARE STILL LEARNING ABOUT IT, THIS LIST MAY NOT BE COMPLETE.**



State of Georgia  
Department of Behavioral  
Health and Developmental  
Disabilities

This COVID-19 Fact Sheet is #8 in a series of Improving Health Outcomes Fact Sheets. It was developed with reference to resources available through US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Georgia Department of Public Health. This Fact Sheet is not a substitute for clinical evaluation or physician's orders. The information above is current as of March 23, 2020.