

# HEALTH FACT SHEET



## COVID-19 SELF CARE

COVID-19 is the disease caused by a coronavirus, the coronaviruses are a family of viruses which can cause infections ranging from COVID-19 in this case through to the common cold.

The coronavirus that causes COVID-19 is a new or novel type of coronavirus — most of the people first infected were in Wuhan City, Hubei province, China. The virus has since spread around the world with over 150 million cases and over 3 million deaths as of May 2021.

### How do you catch COVID-19?

COVID-19 is spread from an infected person to another, usually through the air. Coughing and sneezing make it easier for the virus to spread. Surfaces with the virus on them can also spread the virus if then touched by another person. The virus can live for up to 24 hours on cardboard and up to 72 hours on metal and plastic surfaces.

Infected people can spread the virus even before they have developed symptoms, indeed some people can have the virus and develop no symptoms at all. You are more likely to get the infection if:

- You have had close contact with a person who has COVID-19
- You are having treatment for cancer and your immune system is affected
- You are older
- You are male
- You are obese (very overweight)
- You have chronic kidney disease

### What symptoms can you expect if you have COVID-19 infection?

There is a whole spectrum of disease associated with COVID-19. Some people will get no symptoms at all, also called asymptomatic infection. Many will have an illness like a bad cold or flu. Some will have a more severe illness.

You are more likely to develop severe illness if you:

- Are older
- Are male
- Are obese
- Are a smoker
- Have high blood pressure
- Have diabetes
- Have cardiovascular disease
- Have a chronic lung condition
- have had an organ transplant
- have cancer

The most common symptoms are:

- fever (>100.4)
- coughing
- shortness of breath
- loss of sense of smell (anosmia)
- reduced sense of taste

Less common symptoms include:

- aches and muscle pains
- tiredness
- diarrhoea
- nausea and/or vomiting
- abdominal (tummy) pain
- loss of appetite
- coughing up lots of phlegm (sputum)
- sore throat
- runny nose
- headaches
- rashes

As you can see, many of the less serious symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to those of a bad cold or flu. So, it can be hard to diagnose COVID-19 without testing.

### Prevention

Measures you can take to reduce your risks of being infected and/or passing on the infection to others include:

- hand washing — for at least 20 seconds using soap and water, especially after being in a public place.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands
- Cleaning frequently touched surfaces every day (e.g., door handles, light switches)
- Avoiding close contact with people who are unwell. The recommended distance varies between countries, for example in the US, two meters (six feet) is recommended.

Non-essential travel to the worst affected countries should be avoided. If unavoidable it is still recommended to adhere to the above advice.

### Treatment

There is no cure for COVID-19. There are vaccination programmes underway but these will take several months for most people to be vaccinated.

#### Home treatment

- This will consist of rest
- adequate hydration
- medication to lower fever and pain (if needed).

#### Treating a high temperature

- get lots of rest
- drink plenty of fluids (water is best) to avoid dehydration — drink enough so your pee is light yellow and clear
- take paracetamol or ibuprofen if you feel uncomfortable

## Treating a cough

- it is best to avoid lying on your back, lie on your side or sit upright instead
- you can try taking a teaspoon of honey to ease the cough

## Things to try if you're feeling breathless

If you're feeling breathless, it can help to keep your room cool.

Try turning the heating down or opening a window. Do not use a fan as it may spread the virus.

You could also try:

- breathing slowly in through your nose and out through your mouth, with your lips together like you're gently blowing out a candle
- sitting upright in a chair
- relaxing your shoulders, so you're not hunched
- leaning forward slightly — support yourself by putting your hands on your knees or on something stable like a chair

Try not to panic if you're feeling breathless. This can make it worse.

## Get advice from Anvil if:

- you're feeling gradually more unwell or more breathless
- you have difficulty breathing when you stand up or move around
- you feel very weak, achy or tired
- you're shaking or shivering
- you've lost your appetite
- you're unable to care for yourself — for example, tasks like washing and dressing or making food are too difficult