

# RHRP NEWSLETTER: COVID-19



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Corona, also called coronavirus or COVID-19, is a serious disease affecting millions of people around the world since it was first discovered in late 2019. When so many people are affected by one disease at the same time, health officials call it a pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic is a serious global health threat. Because it is so widespread and can cause such severe illness, it is important to understand this disease and the threat it poses, and to be aware of what information you may hear that is accurate and what is not. We have gathered information that is supported by science for this special issue of the school newsletter to help answer questions that teachers, parents or students may have.

## Let's start with the basics: What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a disease that is caused by a virus, not a bacterium. The virus causing COVID-19 is a type of virus called Coronavirus. Other Coronaviruses cause the common cold, but this particular Coronavirus is more serious and has never been seen before. Scientists are doing research and learning new things daily about this virus and the illness it causes in humans.

## How does COVID-19 spread?

The spread of COVID-19 occurs primarily through very small droplets that come out of the mouth or nose when an infected person coughs, sneezes, sings, talks, or even just breathes. These invisible droplets contain the virus and can be inhaled by nearby uninfected persons. Once inhaled, the virus particles pass into the lining of the person's lungs, replicate, and cause infection. **Wearing a face mask and staying at least 2 meters apart from other people can reduce the spread of the virus by blocking or preventing droplets from traveling very far from a person's nose or mouth and making it less likely that someone else will inhale those droplets and become infected. Masks prevent infected people from infecting others and protect healthy people from inhaling infected droplets coming from someone with COVID-19. If the virus can't travel to another person, it can't infect them.**

Droplets from a cough, sneeze, or while singing, talking, or just breathing also can fall on nearby surfaces where the virus may survive for several days, waiting for someone to touch that surface. If a non - infected person touches an infected surface, the virus gets on their fingers and can gain entry into their body when the contaminated fingers touch that person's eyes, nose or mouth. **Frequent, effective hand washing prevents this form of entry into the body.** The virus will not pass through the skin itself.

After exposure to the virus, it can take from 2-14 days for the virus to multiply in the body enough to produce symptoms of the infection. This is called the incubation period. During this time, even though no symptoms are present, the infected person can transmit the infection to others by coughing, sneezing, talking, or even just breathing. They also can transmit it by touching objects with their hands that have been contaminated with the virus. This situation where the virus is spread before symptoms develop is called **pre-symptomatic spread**, meaning the virus is spread before a person has developed symptoms.



COVID-19 affects different people in different ways. Some people who become infected do not develop symptoms at all or they have very mild symptoms. These people still can transmit the virus to others even though they do not have symptoms. This type of spread of COVID-19 is called **asymptomatic spread**, meaning the person has no symptoms, but still can spread the disease.

It is not yet known for sure how much of the spread of COVID-19 is from pre-symptomatic spread or asymptomatic spread, but research indicates most COVID-19 infections probably are spread by people who do not have symptoms. This means you must be aware that someone who appears to be healthy still could be infected with COVID-19 and could spread it to you and to others.

Children also are infected by COVID-19. Children are just as likely as adults to become infected with the virus and just as likely to spread the virus. COVID-19 infection in children usually causes less severe symptoms than in adults, but children still can become very ill and sometimes even die from the disease.

**REMEMBER: Anyone who is infected, including children, can spread the virus to other people, EVEN IF someone has not yet developed symptoms (pre-symptomatic) or if someone has no symptoms (asymptomatic).**

## What are the symptoms?

**COVID-19 affects different people in different ways. Infected people have had a wide range of symptoms and a wide range of severity from mild symptoms to severe illness. Early symptoms in most COVID-19 patients include:**

- **Fever (elevated temperature)**
- **New, frequent cough**
- **Tightness of the chest & shortness of breath**

Certain groups of people are more likely to develop severe symptoms from COVID-19 infection and to die from the disease. These vulnerable people include the elderly (people over 60 years of age), men, people with obesity, and people with various medical conditions including high blood pressure (hypertension), asthma, and diabetes. **Protect them by protecting yourself and doing the things that help prevent spreading the disease: wear a mask, watch how close you stand to others, and wash your hands often.**

Antibiotics do not work against viruses. Doctors are developing treatments, but these are still considered to be experimental so they are not widely available and there are **NO** treatments that can be used outside of the hospital. Right now, there is **NO** known cure for this disease.

**NO vaccination is available for COVID-19 at this time. NO medications, antibiotics or other remedies have been effective at preventing the disease. The only means of protecting yourself from COVID-19 is to prevent the spread of the disease from one person to another.**



It is especially important to note that a new loss of taste or smell is a very unique symptom for this disease and may occur before other symptoms develop. While the most common or typical symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, cough and shortness of breath, a person also may experience fatigue (tiredness), muscle or body aches (malaise), chills, headache, dizziness, sore throat, runny nose, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea. For some people with cough and difficulty breathing, they may have blue skin, especially around their mouth and lips. This is a particularly serious sign as it means that they have low oxygen levels in their blood.

While symptoms in children and adults are similar, children may be more likely to have diarrhea, vomiting, cold-like symptoms (nasal congestion or runny nose), sore throat, skin rashes or blue spots on their toes.

Even though COVID-19 primarily affects the lungs and breathing system, it can damage the heart, kidneys and brain, and even lead to death. It is a much more serious infection than the common flu or cold and it can take a long time to completely recover.

## *How can I help?*

*Prevention of infection is the only effective method of protecting yourself from this disease that has spread to every country in the world. To protect yourself you should:*

1. **Avoid close contact with people who are sick.**
2. **Stay at least 2 meters away from any other person. This is called social distancing. Do not shake hands or touch other people.**
3. **Wear a mask that covers your mouth AND nose when outside your home (and even in your home if someone else in the household is sick). Wearing a mask may be the very best way to prevent the spread of disease.**
4. **Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly (20 seconds with soap and running water). Encourage your family to do the same.**
5. **Avoid touching your face, particularly your eyes, nose or mouth.**
6. **Cover your cough or sneeze with the bend of your arm (not your hand) or a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands.**
7. **Regularly clean surfaces that are touched often with soap and water or a sanitizer such as 60% alcohol.**
8. **Stay home for 14 days if you or someone you live with has symptoms.**

### **Why are people so worried about it?**

You're hearing so much about COVID-19 because it's a new illness that has never been seen before. Experts around the world are working hard every day to learn about COVID-19 and how to keep people safe. But COVID-19 remains dangerous for many people, such as people over 60 and people with other health problems, like obesity, diabetes or high blood pressure. It can also cause problems for pregnant women. COVID-19 is dangerous for these people because it can cause them to struggle to breathe, and can affect the way their blood travels through their bodies. This can cause people to become extremely unwell, and some may die. COVID-19 is very easily passed on between people, so as a community it is important we protect people by not helping it to spread.

# Want to know more? Here are some facts about COVID-19:

1. The virus that causes COVID-19 is called 'severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2' (SARS-CoV-2). This is because the virus is similar to the virus that caused a widespread illness called SARS in 2003. While they are related, they are very different.
2. The name 'COVID-19' comes from 'CoVi'—short for coronavirus; D- standing for disease and the '19' of COVID-19 is because the first known case of this strain of illness was found in 2019.
3. Current research suggests that SARS-CoV-2 can remain alive on plastic or steel surfaces for up to three days, on paper and cardboard - up to a day, on copper - up to four hours.
4. It is not exactly known where SARS-CoV-2 came from, but bats and pangolins carry viruses similar to this one. Most likely, the virus mutated and was transmitted to some other animal, and then to a human.
5. Antibiotics against coronavirus are useless. In fact, currently there is no known cure for COVID-19.
6. Viruses are extremely small and can't even be seen with a regular microscope. About 100 million copies of the virus could be easily placed on the sharp tip of a needle.
7. An asymptomatic patient (an infected person with no symptoms) is still an active carrier of infection and can infect others. An infected person becomes dangerous to others immediately after being infected - long before they develop their first symptoms (if any).
8. At the initial stage of infection, the virus actively reproduces (replicates) itself in the throat and upper respiratory tract. Then the infection goes down into the lungs, causing inflammation or pneumonia. This is why the first or most common symptom of infection is often a cough. A fever or temperature elevation develops a little later in the infection. Even so, some people who become infected (18% or one in five people) do not ever have a cough
9. On October 11, 2020 there were 37,347,102 known cases of COVID-19 worldwide and over 1.07 million deaths.
10. The 3 countries with the most infections are the United States, India, and Brazil.



**CONTACT US:**

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