



COVID-19

Last update: 2025-06-16

Key facts

- COVID-19 is the disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus. It usually spreads between people in close contact.
- Over 770 million cases and 7 million deaths have been recorded worldwide since December 2019, but the actual number is thought to be higher.
- Coronavirus infections are common in both animals and humans, and some strains of coronaviruses are zoonotic, meaning they can be transmitted between animals and humans.
- While current evidence suggests that SAR-COV-2 emerged from an animal, till date, there is not enough scientific evidence to identify the source or explain the original transmission route to humans, which may have involved an intermediate host.

Transmission: Droplets, aerosols and direct contact

- When infected people cough, sneeze, blow their nose, or spit they spread small droplets through the air, which are then breathed in by other people
- Direct contact (for example, through kissing, sharing cups or eating utensils) with infected saliva or nose mucous

Most vulnerable to severe consequences

- Elderly
- People with chronic lung conditions (for example, asthma)
- People with weakened immune systems and/or chronic diseases (for example, diabetes or cancer)

Symptoms

- Fever (usually)
- Cough (usually)

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath (usually)
- Loss of taste or smell (sometimes)
- Headache (sometimes)
- Sore throat (sometimes)
- Abdominal pain (sometimes)
- Diarrhoea (sometimes)
- Muscle pain (sometimes)

What can you do to prevent and control an epidemic?

Monitoring the community and identifying sick people

- Identify and isolate sick people before they spread the disease to others

Treatment and management

- Refer suspected cases to health facilities
- Provide psychosocial support to the sick person and their family members

Sanitation and waste management

- Promote proper disposal of waste that might be contaminated
- Promote disinfection of reusable supplies

Hand and respiratory hygiene

- Promote good hand hygiene (handwashing with soap)
 - BEFORE: preparing food; eating; feeding a child; treating wounds; or caring for sick people
 - AFTER: using the toilet or cleaning a baby; touching garbage or waste; touching or feeding animals; blowing nose, coughing or sneezing; treating wounds; or caring for sick people
- Promote respiratory hygiene and coughing etiquette (cover your cough or sneeze using your sleeve or a tissue, wash hands after coughing or sneezing, do not spit onto the ground or in public)

Personal protection and hygiene

- Practise and promote social distancing
- Use and promote personal protective equipment (for example, face masks and gloves) when in contact with potential cases

Social mobilization and health promotion

- Find out the specific advice being given by health and other relevant authorities
- Promote recommended health practices (such as vaccination, social distancing, separation of healthy people and sick people, etc.)
- Model following this advice and inform community members of current health practice advice
- Offer support and encouragement to follow the advice
- Try to gain understanding about if and why health practice advice is not being followed
- With the advice of your supervisor and health authorities, work with communities to overcome barriers to following health advice and recommended practices

Immunization

- Support mass vaccination campaigns where available

Mapping and community assessment

A. Make a map of the community.

B. Mark the following information on the map:

- How many people have fallen sick with COVID-19? Where?
- How many people have died? Where? When?
- Who and where are the vulnerable people?
- Where are the health facilities? (include traditional healers)

C. Record the following information on the back of the map:

- When did people start to fall sick with COVID-19?
- How many people live in the affected community? How many are children under five years?
- Are most people in the community vaccinated against COVID-19?
 - Is there a vaccination campaign planned?
- What are the community's habits, practices and beliefs about vaccinations? Are there societal, cultural or religious beliefs that prevent people from getting vaccinated?

- Are there handwashing facilities in the community? Are soap and water always available?
- How common is it for people to live or work together in crowded spaces?
 - Is there ventilation and fresh air in homes, schools, and workplaces?
- Who and where are the vulnerable people? Who is most affected by COVID-19?
- What are the community's habits, practices and beliefs about caring for sick people?
 - Consider any differences in roles and responsibilities between women and men.
- Is a social mobilization or health promotion programme in place?
- Which sources do people use / trust the most for information?
 - Are there rumours or misinformation about COVID-19? What are the rumours?

Other resources

- WOA – World Organization for Animal Health; [What is SARS-CoV-2?](#); 2024
- WHO – World Health Organization; [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#); 2023
- WHO – World Health Organization; [Novel Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#); 2024