

RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

COVID-19:

WHAT IS IT AND HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF AND OTHERS?

This fact sheet provides some basic information on COVID-19 and precautions you can take to keep yourself and your loved ones safe.

It is important to note that most people who have had close contact with someone confirmed as having COVID-19 have not been infected or become ill.

What is COVID-19 (novel coronavirus)?

COVID-19 is caused by a virus (more specifically, a coronavirus) that primarily affects the respiratory system (lungs and breathing tubes) but may also damage the heart, nervous system and can cause blood clots.

Health officials first reported the disease in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China, on 31 December 2019. It has since been reported in other provinces and in many other countries. The latest information on this is available on the CDC website: www.cdc.gov

How serious is it?

Many people will have mild or moderate symptoms, but some people can become seriously ill and require treatment in the hospital. Most (but not all) of the people who have died after contracting COVID-19 had pre-existing health conditions.

Those most at risk of becoming seriously ill are those with weakened immune systems, older people and those with pre-existing health conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, cancer and chronic lung disease.

Currently, there is no specific cure for coronavirus, treatment is aimed at alleviating symptoms.

There is no vaccine for COVID-19 available at this time. Researchers continue to work on the development of a safe and effective vaccine.

How is it spread?

COVID-19 can be spread through person-to-person contact. The virus spreads mostly from an infected person's respiratory secretions, such as through coughing, sneezing, or speaking but also may spread through touching infected surfaces.

What is a close contact?

A person is considered as potentially infectious 48 hours prior to developing symptoms, while symptomatic, and until symptom-free for 24 hours or 10 days after symptoms started (the longer of the two). A close contact is anyone who has had one of the following contacts with a person while the person is infectious:

- living in the same household as someone with COVID-19
- having spent two hours or longer in the same room as someone with COVID-19
- having been face-to-face within six feet or less of someone with COVID-19 for more than 15 minutes without proper PPE in any other setting not listed above.

What are the symptoms?

Most people confirmed to have COVID-19 display one or more of the symptoms listed below:

- fever (at least 38°C)
 - cough
 - shortness of breath
- OR
- GI symptoms
 - Loss of sense of taste or smell

However, some individuals with COVID will have mild symptoms (such as cold-like symptoms) or no symptoms at all.

Prevention.

There are simple, everyday measures you can take to help protect yourself and others from respiratory illnesses.

- Social distancing - stay at least 6 feet apart from other people
- Wear a mask covering both your mouth and nose when in public or shared spaces
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and dry them for 20 seconds – or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze – then put the tissue in a waste receptacle.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid personal contact, such as kissing, or sharing cups or eating utensils, with sick people.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects, such as doorknobs.