
Preparing for the Coronavirus

You're hearing a lot about this — everywhere. Below you'll find what Highmark believes are the most important things to know, to do, and to be prepared for. Knowledge really is safety.

What we do know

- The new coronavirus, or COVID-19*, was identified in December 2019.
- It originated in Wuhan, China, and is spreading in the U.S. and internationally.
- It is more contagious than the seasonal flu.
- It produces flu-like symptoms — fever, cough, shortness of breath.
- In about 15% of cases, it can lead to severe respiratory illness, such as pneumonia.
- There is no vaccine and no antiviral treatment.
- The virus is fatal in about 2% of reported cases — more than the seasonal flu, but less than previous coronavirus outbreaks SARS and MERS.

“Everyday preventive actions to help avert the spread of respiratory diseases like the coronavirus are key. While it sounds quite simple, washing your hands with soap and water, avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth, and staying home when you are sick are fundamental to avoiding and stopping the spread of illness. If you feel sick, always seek medical advice and call your doctor.”

— Charles DeShazer, M.D.,
Chief Medical Officer, Highmark



How to protect yourself

- People who are sneezing, wheezing, coughing — just avoid them.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (it’s longer than you think — try saying the Pledge of Allegiance twice or silently sing “Happy Birthday” twice, too).
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) if soap and water are not available.
- Apply the “not above the shoulders” rule — avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Commonly used surfaces — clean them often.
- You are actually at greater risk of getting the seasonal flu than this new virus — so get a flu shot.

Where to go for information

- To stay up to date, please visit highmarkanswers.com.
- For answers on coronavirus, the flu, or any health-related questions, call your doctor.
- If you don’t have a doctor, visit our online Find a Doctor service for help in locating one nearby: www.Highmarkbcbs.com/find-a-doctor.
- CDC Coronavirus fact sheet: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/2019-ncov-factsheet.pdf>
- Main CDC Coronavirus site: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

*The World Health Organization has named the disease caused by the virus COVID-19: “CO” stands for corona, “VI” for virus, “D” stands for disease, and “19” for the year it emerged.

Content source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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