What you need to know about Coronavirus (COVID-19)
March 13, 2020

VERMONT
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

What is the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19)?

Coronaviruses are a large group of viruses that can cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to more serious respiratory infections like bronchitis, pneumonia or severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS).

The 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) causes a respiratory infection that originated in Hubei province (Wuhan), China.

To learn more about the 2019 novel coronavirus, visit healthvermont.gov/COVID19.

What are the symptoms?

Like the flu and other common respiratory infections, symptoms range from mild to severe and can include:

- fever
- cough
- difficulty breathing

Complications from the 2019 novel coronavirus can include serious conditions, like pneumonia or kidney failure, and in some cases, death.

How does the virus spread?

Coronaviruses are spread mainly from person to person through close contact, for example, in a household, workplace or health care center.

What does close contact mean?

Close contact means being within six feet (2 meters) of someone for a long time. This happens when caring for, being intimate partners with, living with, visiting, or sharing a health care waiting area. If you have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19: stay home, limit your contact with others, and call Health Department Epidemiology at 802-863-7240 to discuss whether you need to see a provider and how you will monitor yourself for symptoms.

Close contact does NOT mean: being more than six feet away in the same indoor environment for a long period of time, walking by, or briefly being in the same room with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. In these situations, you should observe yourself for symptoms. You do NOT need to call the Health Department.

When someone tests positive for COVID-19, the Health Department gets in touch with the close contacts of the individual.

How can I protect myself against the 2019 novel coronavirus?

There is no vaccine available to protect against the 2019 novel coronavirus.

There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses.

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

What should I do if I think I have the virus?

If you have fever, cough, difficulty breathing and your symptoms feel worse than a common cold and you have travelled to an affected area within 14 days of symptom onset, call Vermont Department of Health Epidemiology at 802-863-7240.

If you have been exposed to the 2019 novel coronavirus, including during travels, staying home, and limiting contact with others will help prevent further spread.

If you are sick or concerned about your health, contact your health care provider **by phone**. Please avoid going to the hospital, except in a life-threatening situation.

Older Vermonters and people with chronic conditions

Some people are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness, including older adults and people with chronic (long-lasting) medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes or lung disease. According to the CDC, starting at age 60, there is an increasing risk of disease and the risk increases with age. The highest risk of serious illness is in people older than 80 years.

Older adults and people with chronic conditions should take extra precautions including:

- Stock up on supplies
- Avoid crowds
- Avoid cruise travel and non-essential air travel
- Stay away from others who are sick

Read the CDC's full guidance on [People At Risk for Serious Illness from COVID-19](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html) at this address: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html

Should I avoid travel to some places?

Learn about travel advisories related to the 2019 novel:
 www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers