What is COVID-19?
(formerly "the Novel 2019-nCOV Coronavirus")

COVID-19 is a new form of Coronavirus disease due to the novel virus SARS-CoV2 that causes acute infection with respiratory symptoms. This new virus is different than the ones that cause SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) or MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome). It is also different from the Coronavirus that causes seasonal infection in the U.S. The first cases of COVID-19 were seen in Wuhan, China. As of March 2020, the virus has spread within China and to many other countries worldwide, including the U.S. COVID-19 is now a pandemic.

The number of cases has been increasing quickly and is now considered a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO). This means that the virus is being spread simultaneously in more than three different geographical regions in the world. For up to date information on this outbreak, go to https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/index.html

Symptoms of COVID-19 include:
- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

Prevention and control of COVID-19 infection:

General principles—
- Illness can range from mild to severe.
- Elderly people and others with pre-existing medical illnesses like diabetes, heart or lung disease are at the highest risk of dying from infection.
- Right now, the best way to lessen the virus' impact is to slow its spread. This will ensure that our healthcare systems aren't overwhelmed and buy time for researchers who are working hard to develop vaccines and treatments for the infection.
- Everyone needs to do their best to avoid getting sick as well as spread the virus to other people.
- You do not have to be sick or have symptoms to transmit the virus.

What you can do—
As noted, it is very important for people to follow basic infection control measures to help prevent COVID-19 and/or other viruses, like influenza. This includes the following actions:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow. Throw used tissues in the trash.
- Avoid being in large gatherings. Until the pandemic is over, maintain social distancing.

- Wash your hands often and for at least 20 seconds with soap and water. (Sing "Happy Birthday" twice). If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

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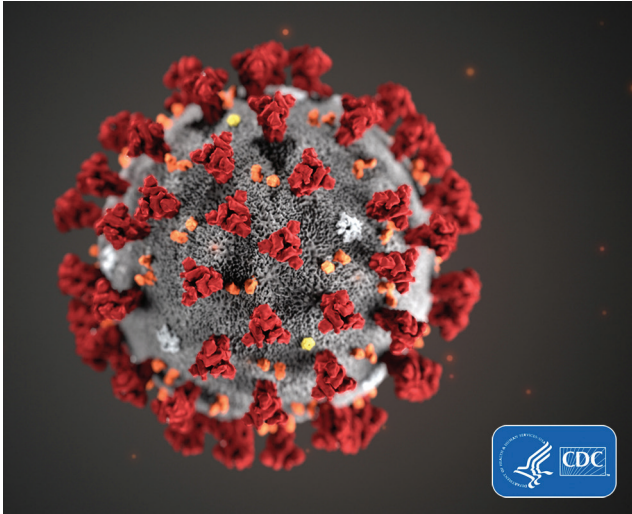
SARS-CoV-2 is the virus that causes COVID-19

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched items and surfaces with a regular household cleaning spray followed by an EPA-approved disinfectant such as diluted bleach (0.1%) or alcohol solution (62-71%) or hydrogen peroxide (0.5%). COVID-19 can survive on surfaces for as long as 5 days. For full list of disinfectants, see https://www.americanchemistry.com/Novel-Coronavirus-Fighting-Products-List.pdf

- Wear a facemask if you are sick. If you are NOT sick, you do not need to wear a mask. Directions for how and when to wear a mask can be found at https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/when-and-how-to-use-masks.

- Older persons and others at risk for severe illness should avoid nonessential travel. The CDC maintains a regularly updated travel advisory site.

- It may take up to 14 days to develop symptoms once exposed to this virus. If you have traveled to China or another area affected by this virus, you should stay home for at least 14 days.

Stay informed and do not panic. There is hope.

- Most cases are mild.
- Most people get better
- Rapid progress is being made on vaccines to prevent infection and treatments for infection
- Rely on evidence- based sources such as the CDC, WHO, or local public health departments.

Treatment—

- There is no specific treatment for COVID-19. However, there are experimental drugs being used for severe cases.

- People with this illness are treated based upon their symptoms and the severity of illness. The majority of people will have a mild illness and get better.

- Many people can recover at home, but those with more severe illness may need to receive care in the hospital.

- People who have or are likely to have this virus will need to wear a mask to help control the spread of virus to others.

Seek medical help—

- If you think you have been exposed to COVID-19 and you have symptoms (fever or cough or shortness of breath), please call your doctor or healthcare professional first! They will assess you and determine if you need to be seen and tested. If so, you will be given instructions on what to do next. This will enable the office, clinic or acute care facility to get ready for your arrival and help you avoid spreading the virus to others.

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Resources
American Thoracic Society
- www.thoracic.org/patients

CDC
- https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/index.html
- CDC General Hotline: 1-800-232-4636

WHO
- https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus

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