

What is novel coronavirus?

COVID-19 (formerly known as the “novel coronavirus”) is a new virus strain spreading from person-to-person. It is currently in the United States and many other countries.

How does novel coronavirus spread?

Health experts are still learning more about the spread. Currently, it is thought to spread:

- through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes
- between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet)
- by touching a surface or object with the virus and then touching the mouth, nose, or eyes

What are the symptoms?

People who have been diagnosed with novel coronavirus have reported symptoms that may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure to the virus.



Guidance for people at higher risk for severe COVID-19 illness

Public Health recommends that people at higher risk of severe illness should stay home and away from large groups of people as much as possible. People at higher risk include people:

- **Over 60 years of age**
- **With underlying health conditions including include heart disease, lung disease, or diabetes**
- **With weakened immune systems**
- **Who are pregnant**

Anyone who has questions about whether their condition puts them at risk for severe COVID-19 illness should consult with their healthcare providers.

Guidance for schools

The available data about COVID-19 cases has shown that children and youth have not shown to be at high risk for serious illness from this virus. We consider both the potential benefits and negative consequences of closures when we make recommendations. **Public Health is not recommending closing schools at this time.** If there is a confirmed case of COVID-19, Public Health will work with the school to determine the best actions including potential school closure. We will be providing schools information about how to stay open safely.

Some children and staff have underlying health conditions, such as weakened immune systems, that put them at higher risk. Caregivers of children with underlying health conditions should consult with healthcare providers about whether their children should stay home.

Guidance for workplaces and businesses

Employers should take steps to make it more feasible for their employees to work in ways that minimize close contact with large numbers of people. Employers should:



- Maximize telecommuting options employees.
- Urge employees to stay home when they are sick.
- Maximize flexibility in sick leave benefits for those who are ill or who are recommended to stay home because they are high risk.
- Consider staggering start and end times to reduce large numbers of people coming together at the same time.

Event and community gathering considerations

During this critical period in the outbreak, if you can feasibly avoid bringing large groups of people together, consider postponing events and gatherings. If you can't avoid bringing groups of people together:

- Urge anyone who is sick to not attend.
- Encourage those who are at higher risk for COVID-19 to not attend.
- Try to find ways to give people more physical space so that they aren't in close contact as much as possible.
- Encourage attendees to maintain good healthy habits, such as frequent hand washing.
- Clean surfaces frequently. Standard cleaning products are effective against COVID-19.

Guidance for everyone



You can decrease the risk to yourself, and importantly, to those who are more vulnerable to COVID-19:

- **Stay home** and do not go out in public when you are sick.
- **Avoid medical settings in general unless necessary.** If you are ill in any way **call your doctor's office first before going in.**
- **Even if you are not ill, avoid visiting hospitals, long term care facilities or nursing homes** as much as possible. If you do need to visit one of these facilities limit your time there and keep 6 feet away from patients.
- **Do not go to the emergency room unless essential.** Emergency medical services need to serve the most critical needs first. If you have cough, fever, or other symptoms, call your regular doctor first.
- **Practice excellent personal hygiene habits**, including washing your hands with soap and water frequently, coughing into a tissue or your elbow, and avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- **Stay away from people who are ill**, especially if you are at higher risk for coronavirus.
- **Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects** (like doorknobs and light switches). Regular household cleaners are effective.
- **Get plenty of rest, drink plenty of fluids, eat healthy foods, and manage your stress** to keep your immunity strong.



If you have symptoms of COVID-19 or questions, you can call:

- King County Novel Coronavirus Call Center, **206-477-3977**. This helpline is open from 8 a.m. – 7 p.m. every day.
- Washington State Novel Coronavirus Call Center, **1-800-525-0127** and press #. This helpline is open from 6 a.m. – 10 p.m. every day.

The operators are able to connect with a third-party interpreter. You will need to be able to tell them in English what language you need for interpretation. You may experience long wait times.

Be ready to help one another. A strong sense of community will carry us through a difficult time.