

Frequency asked questions and myth busters on COVID-19

What is a pandemic? [1]

A pandemic is the worldwide spread of a new disease that is able to infect people easily and spread from person to person in an efficient and sustained way in multiple regions. The World Health Organization's declaration refers to the SPREAD of a disease, rather than the severity of the illness it causes.

What is the difference when using the surgical mask and the N95?

Standard square loose-fitting surgical masks are good in protecting against droplet-spread to prevent infection. However, if you were to use it in a long term, the mask will no longer be efficient in stopping the transmission of viruses. The next level of a mask is the N95, which needs to fit well for you to breathe through the filter, rather than the leaking air.

What is *social distancing*?

Social distancing involves remaining out of congregate settings, avoiding mass gatherings,[2] and maintaining ideally 3 feet (about 1 metre)[3] between people.

Is *social distancing* the same as *self-quarantine* or *isolation*?

Quarantine or *isolation* restricts the movement of people within a certain area or zone to limit transferring and spreading infection.

To be more specific, *isolation* refers to separating sick people from people who aren't sick, while *quarantine* refers to the separation and restriction of movement of people who were exposed to the virus to see if they become sick. On the other hand, *social distancing* has no locational constraints; rather it is a behavioral practice to lower the risk.

What are some ideas and practical examples [4][3] of social distancing?

Libraries, auditorium, meeting rooms, cafeterias:

If feasible, practice "1 person every 2 seats".

Reception desks:

Discussions limited to 15 minutes. Cleaning and disinfecting of reception desks to be more frequent.

While lining-up:

A minimum distance of 3 feet (about 1 metre) should be maintained by those waiting in line.

Offices:

Encourage teleworking when the nature of professional activities allows it, and according to the procedures established by management.

Does garlic have any effect at all against COVID-19?

There is no evidence from the current outbreak that eating garlic has protected people from COVID-19.

Are there medicines or therapies that can prevent or cure COVID-19?

While some western, traditional or home remedies may provide comfort and alleviate symptoms of COVID-19, there is no evidence that current medicine can prevent or cure the disease. The World Health Organization does not recommend self-medication with any medicines, including antibiotics, as a prevention or cure for COVID-19. However, there are several ongoing clinical trials include both western and traditional medicines.

Is there a vaccine, drug or treatment for COVID-19?

Not yet. To date, there is no vaccine and no specific antiviral medicine to prevent or treat COVID-2019. However, those affected should receive care to relieve symptoms. People with serious illnesses should be hospitalized. Most patients recover thanks to supportive care. While there are several therapeutics currently in clinical trials in China and more than 20 vaccines in development for COVID-19, there are currently no licensed vaccines or therapeutics for COVID-19.

Is it safe to receive a package from any area where COVID-19 has been reported?

Yes. The likelihood of an infected person contaminating commercial goods is low and the risk of catching the virus that causes COVID-19 from a package that has been moved, travelled, and exposed to different conditions and temperature is also low.

What is the *case fatality rate*? Is it the same as *infection fatality rate*?

The *case fatality rate* is the number of deaths divided by the total number of confirmed cases. Based on current data, the World Health Organization reports the global *case fatality rate* of COVID-19 to be 3.4%,^[5] keeping in mind that figures are evolving and severe cases are always reported at the beginning of an outbreak because they are those we usually find first. However, scientists hope to have a more comprehensive number called the *infection fatality rate* over a period, which includes everyone who was infected with the virus.

Will the flu vaccination work for COVID-19?

While the influenza vaccine is not effective against the COVID-19 virus, it is highly recommended to get vaccinated each year to prevent influenza infection.

Does COVID-19 affect older people, or are younger people also susceptible?

People of all ages can be infected with COVID-19. Older people and people with pre-existing medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease) appear to be more vulnerable to becoming severely ill with the virus.

Are antibiotics effective in preventing and treating COVID-19?

No, antibiotics do not work against viruses, only bacteria. However, if you are hospitalised for COVID-19, you may receive antibiotics since bacterial co-infection is possible.

Is wearing rubber gloves while out in the public effective in preventing COVID-19?

No, regularly washing your bare hands offers more protection against catching COVID-19 than wearing rubber gloves. You can still pick up COVID-19 contamination on rubber gloves. If you then touch your face, the contamination goes from your glove to your face and can infect you.

Is it safe for me to donate blood? [6]

Individuals are not at risk of contracting COVID-19 through the blood donation process since respiratory viruses are generally not known to be transmitted by donation that is conducted according to sterile collection protocols.

Myth busters [7]

- COVID-19 can be transmitted in areas with hot and humid climates.
- Cold and snow CANNOT kill the COVID-19 virus.
- Taking a hot bath does not prevent COVID-19.
- The COVID-19 virus CANNOT be transmitted through mosquito bites.
- Hand dryers are NOT effective in killing the COVID-19 virus.
- UV lamps should not be used to sterilise hands or other areas of skin as UV radiation can cause skin irritation.
- Spraying alcohol or chlorine all over your body will NOT kill the COVID-19 virus that has already entered your body.
- At present, there is no evidence that companion animals/ pets such as dogs or cats can be infected with the COVID-19 virus.
- Vaccines against pneumonia, such as pneumococcal vaccine and Haemophilus influenza type B (Hib) vaccine, do not provide protection against COVID-19.

Reference list

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6. Statement on Coronavirus and Blood Donation [Internet]. [cited 2020 Mar 12];Available from: <http://www.aabb.org/advocacy/regulatorygovernment/Pages/Statement-on-Coronavirus-and-Blood-Donation.aspx>

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