

Q. How do you protect yourself from the coronavirus?

A. It's not that different from protecting yourself from the flu or common cold.

Right now the coronavirus (COVID-19) is a global pandemic.¹ It's serious. Many schools and businesses are closed to prevent community spread. You can get the virus from a single droplet when an infected person coughs or sneezes, or from contaminated surfaces. And right now, there is no vaccine.

But it's not like the science-fiction thriller *Contagion*, starring Matt Damon and Gwyneth Paltrow.

Why? Most people who get COVID-19 will experience mild flu-like symptoms (fever, cough, and shortness of breath). And most will recover in a few weeks.

However, COVID-19 may cause serious health problems for older adults. You're also at risk if you have heart disease, diabetes, or other chronic conditions.

So how do you protect yourself from COVID-19? Here's how:²

1. Keep your distance. Stay home if you can. It's the best way to prevent community spread. You'll limit your chances of getting sick. And if you have COVID-19 (you can be contagious for 2 to 14 days without any symptoms), you'll avoid spreading the virus. If you have to be around people, try to stay at least six feet away. Follow all guidelines in your community to shelter in place and avoid large gatherings.



5 Ways to Stay Healthy

2. Wash your hands.³ Rinse your hands with water. Lather up with soap. Scrub palms, between the fingers, under fingernails, and the backs of hands for 20 seconds. Rinse, and dry off with a clean towel, paper towel, or air dry. If you don't have access to soap and water, use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

3. Cover it. If you cough or sneeze, cover it with a tissue or use your elbow. Throw away used tissues. Wash your hands afterwards. If you have COVID-19, wear a mask anytime you're around other people, especially at home.

4. Disinfect hard surfaces. Research shows the coronavirus can last 2 to 3 days on hard surfaces.⁴ Clean dirty surfaces with soap and water first. Then use a disinfectant, alcohol, or bleach solution to wipe down faucets, toilets, sinks, keyboards, phones, desks, countertops, light switches, doorknobs, toys, steering wheel, etc.

5. If you get sick... call your doctor or healthcare provider first. In most cases, people with COVID-19 can recover at home. Making a trip to the hospital, urgent care, or doctor's office only increases the chance of

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community spread. If you feel worse or think it's an emergency, call 911 or seek medical care.

Healthy lifestyle habits can also help you fight the flu, common cold, and viruses. Eat more fruits and vegetables, especially citrus fruits and drinks. Drink plenty of water. Get 7 to 8 hours of sleep each night. Avoid staying up late or working to exhaustion. Manage stress in healthy ways. And get at least 30 minutes of exercise a day. You'll feel better. And you'll recover faster if you do get sick.

References

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