

Corona Virus - COVID-19 FAQs

FAQs - According to the World Health Organization (WHO) and Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA)

What is a corona virus?

Corona Viruses are a large family of viruses that are known to cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV).

What is a novel corona virus?

A novel corona virus (CoV) is a new strain of corona virus that has not been previously identified in humans.

What is 2019 novel corona virus?

An outbreak of novel corona virus causing severe acute respiratory illness that was reported in Wuhan, China in December 2019. This virus has not been previously identified and so, there is little known about it, including its origin.

The virus belongs in the same family of corona viruses as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

What are the symptoms of someone infected with corona virus?

The symptoms can be different depending on the type of corona virus; however, common signs include:

- Respiratory symptoms
- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Breathing difficulties
- Sore throat
- Runny nose
- Aches and pains

These symptoms are usually mild and begin gradually. Some people become infected but do not develop any symptoms and do not feel ill. About 80% of persons infected recover from the disease without needing special treatment. Older persons and those with underlying medical issues like high blood pressure, heart problems or diabetes, are more likely to develop serious illness if exposed to the virus.

In more severe cases infection can cause:

- Pneumonia
- Severe acute respiratory syndrome
- Kidney failure

Is there a vaccine for a novel corona virus?

Yes.

There are several COVID-19 vaccines validated for use by WHO (given Emergency Use Listing). The first mass vaccination programme started in early December 2020 and the number of vaccination doses administered is updated on a daily basis on the COVID-19 dashboard.

The WHO Emergency Use Listing process determines whether a product can be recommended for use based on all the available data on safety and efficacy and on its suitability in low- and middle-income countries. Vaccines are assessed to ensure they meet acceptable standards of quality, safety and efficacy using clinical trial data, manufacturing and quality control processes. The assessment weighs the threat posed by the emergency as well as the benefit that would accrue from the use of the product against any potential risks.

In line with their national regulations and legislation, countries have the autonomy to issue emergency use authorizations for any health product. Domestic emergency use authorizations are issued at the discretion of countries and not subject to WHO approval.

As of 12 January 2022, the following vaccines have obtained EUL:

- [The Pfizer/BioNTech Comirnaty vaccine](#), 31 December 2020.
- [The SII/COVISHIELD and AstraZeneca/AZD1222 vaccines](#), 16 February 2021.
- [The Janssen/Ad26.COV 2.S vaccine developed by Johnson & Johnson](#), 12 March 2021.
- [The Moderna COVID-19 vaccine \(mRNA 1273\)](#), 30 April 2021.
- [The Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccine](#), 7 May 2021.
- [The Sinovac-CoronaVac vaccine](#), 1 June 2021.
- [The Bharat Biotech BBV152 COVAXIN vaccine](#), 3 November 2021.
- [The Covovax \(NVX-CoV2373\) vaccine](#), 17 December 2021.
- [The Nuvaxovid \(NVX-CoV2373\) vaccine](#), 20 December 2021

How is COVID-19 spread?

The disease can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth, which are emitted when a person who has the disease coughs or sneezes. An uninfected person can contract the disease by breathing in these droplets. Further, these droplets can land on objects or surfaces and when an uninfected person touches these areas then touch their eyes, nose or mouth, they can contract the disease.

What can I do to protect myself and family members?

To reduce exposure to and the transmission of the disease, you must maintain basic hand and respiratory hygiene and avoid close contact, where possible, with anyone who has symptoms of respiratory illness such as coughing and sneezing.

You can also:

- Frequently clean hands using soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer;
- Cover mouth and nose, with a tissue, when coughing or sneezing and dispose of tissue immediately. You can also cough or sneeze into a flexed elbow,
- Avoid close contact with anyone who has a fever and a cough,
- Maintain at least three (3) feet distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.
- If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical care and share previous travel history, where applicable, with your health care provider.
- Avoid touching your face, in particular your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Stay at home if you feel ill. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention immediately. Call your health center in advance and follow the directions of the local health authority.