

What we know about COVID-19

COVID-19

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a new coronavirus. It mainly affects the lungs, but can also damage the heart or brain. Some people with COVID-19 infection have symptoms for months after the infection is gone. Long-term symptoms may include fatigue, shortness of breath, cough, joint pain, pounding heartbeat, trouble concentrating, skin rash or hair loss.

The coronavirus continues to mutate and change. Different [variants](#) are now in Ontario. They spread infection more easily and cause more serious disease.

Transmission

COVID-19 is spread by respiratory droplets and aerosols, most often from close contact with an infected person. Transmission can happen before the person begins to show symptoms.

COVID-19 can be spread:

- when sharing hugs and kisses
- when people gather close together, talking, laughing, singing, sneezing or coughing
- when people linger to talk forgetting to physical distance
- in crowded indoor spaces
- when touching the mouth, nose or eyes after touching surfaces contaminated with the virus

COVID-19 is not known to spread through the air over long distances, through ventilation systems or through food or water. Learn more about [COVID-19 transmission, aerosols and ventilation](#).

Symptoms

Common [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 are fever, cough, trouble swallowing, sore throat, runny nose, loss of taste or smell, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and difficulty breathing. Symptoms can take up to 14 days to appear. Older adults and children may also have general symptoms such as chills, headaches, sleeping more than usual, feeling disoriented, confusion, muscle aches, dizziness, weakness, or falls.

Potential for complications

Older adults and people with health conditions are at greater risk for serious illness, requiring hospital care. In very rare cases, some children can get an unusual inflammatory condition. Seek

medical attention right away if a child is not improving or gets a rash, long lasting fever, pink eyes and/or swelling to hands and feet.

Steps to keep everyone safe

- Get the COVID-19 vaccine.
- Limit non-essential trips outside your home.
- Stay home and self-isolate if you are feeling unwell. Get tested.
- Keep at least two metres physical distance from others.
- Wear a [face mask](#) in indoor public places and outdoors when physical distancing is difficult.
- Wash your hands or use alcohol-based sanitizer often.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with an elbow or a tissue.
- Clean and disinfect high touched surfaces.
- Download the [COVID Alert mobile app](#).

What to do if you have symptoms

If you have one or more symptoms of COVID-19, or you were in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, get tested. Make an appointment at an [assessment centre](#) near you. Stay home and self-isolate while you wait for your test result.

To [self-isolate](#) means to stay home and away from others, including people in your household, as you may be infectious. Do not go outside, to public places, or use public transit. Shop online or call a friend to pick up supplies for you. Call your health care provider if you need help to relieve your symptoms. Call 911 if you or someone else is having difficulty breathing.

Ventilation or air flow

Good air flow can help reduce the spread of COVID-19. To ensure good air flow in your home:

- Open windows and doors, if it is safe or possible.
- Keep your heating and air conditioning systems well maintained.
- Use the highest efficiency filter that is compatible with your furnace, air conditioner, etc.
- When using ceiling or portable fans, use upward airflow rotation.
- Keep the area around air vents clear of furniture, etc.

There isn't evidence to demonstrate portable air cleaners can prevent the spread of COVID-19 but good ventilation in indoor spaces may help. Portable air cleaners may be useful in areas without good ventilation, for example, in a small room without windows.

COVID-19 vaccination

COVID-19 vaccines used in Ontario are safe for most people, including those with health conditions, weakened immune systems, auto-immune disorders and people who are pregnant and breastfeeding. The vaccines are effective at preventing serious illness from COVID-19. While vaccination is not mandatory, everyone is strongly encouraged to get vaccinated as soon as possible. Learn more about [COVID-19 vaccines](#).

More information

Visit our website at toronto.ca/COVID19 or call us at 416-338-7600.