

The Novel Coronavirus (COVID 19): A Factsheet

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Introduction

The “invasion” of COVID-19 has caused a worldwide crisis. It was declared a worldwide pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 1, 2020. More than 1.3 million cases have been identified worldwide with more than 70,000 deaths. In the United States, there have been 347,000 cases (more than 122,000 in New York) and more than 10,000 deaths. The first documented case in the United States was on January 21, 2020 in Washington state. The United States has the third highest number of COVID-19 deaths in the world, behind Italy and Spain.

What is Coronavirus (COVID 19)?

COVID 19. Is an infectious disease caused by a new coronavirus (novel coronavirus) first noted in Wuhan China in mid-2019. COVID-19 is short for **CO**rona**VI**rus **D**isease **2019**. This virus affects humans and can be passed from person to person, primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes (or sometimes talks close to another person). There have been cases of humans passing the virus to animals. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that can cause illness in animals or humans. They are called zoonotic in that some can jump from animals to humans. Only four of the coronaviruses infect humans. These illnesses can be as minor as the common cold or as serious as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). **COVID-19 is a new virus.** There are many theories as to where the virus came from and these theories range from it being a mutation of a previous coronavirus to an animal virus that infected humans to it being developed in a lab as part of a biological warfare program. In my opinion, at this point, it really doesn't matter where it came from because we should concentrate our efforts on containing and preventing its spread while experts try to find a cure.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

The most common symptoms are fever, cough (dry or productive), sore throat, and tiredness. One significant early symptom is loss of the sense of smell and taste. Other less frequent symptoms are muscle aches, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat and diarrhea. The

symptoms are usually mild and begin gradually. Some infected people have no symptoms at all but still can infect others. Not everyone who is infected will have a fever (it takes 2-10 days after being infected to develop a fever). About 80% of infected people recover without serious illness but about 16% of infected people become seriously ill. Children and young people can be infected but their symptoms are usually less severe. It is very important for young people to adhere to the precautions so that they don't pass the virus to their elders. It has been noted that men suffer from serious disease more frequently than women although the reason for this is not known. It is important that if you feel sick, call your doctor. Don't go to the emergency room before you speak to your doctor.

Who Gets COVID-19?

Everyone is at risk of contracting the infection. People with pre-existing conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes mellitus, cirrhosis, HIV with low CD4 counts, transplant recipients, chronic lung disease such as asthma, hypertension and cancer tend to develop more severe and often life-threatening illness. AUSA (Afrikans from the United States of America) are affected by these health problems at a rate greater than the overall population so that these documented health disparities place us at greater risk of not only developing the infection but also having worse outcomes. The existing racial health disparities are well known. The problem is that all areas don't include race in their statistics. Of those that do, the facts are alarming:

1. In Michigan, AUSA make up 14% of the population but comprise 33% of the cases of COVID-19 and 40% of the deaths.
2. In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, AUSA make up 27% of the population but comprise almost 50% of the cases and 81% of the deaths.
3. In Illinois, AUSA make up almost 15% of the population but comprise 28% of the cases.
4. In Mecklenburg County, NC which makes up Charlotte, AUSA make up 33% of the population but 44% of the cases.
5. In Louisiana, although no racial statistics are kept, 40% of the deaths occurred in Orleans Parish where the majority of the population is AUSA.
6. In New York, the hardest hit communities are lower income communities of which AUSA and Brown people are in significant numbers.
7. In Philadelphia, PA, the highest percentage of people who test positive for the virus come from zip codes with large AUSA and Brown populations.
8. In Memphis, TN, screening centers are focused in affluent suburbs.
9. In Los Angeles, CA, screening centers are focused in an almost circular fashion around South LA which is predominately AUSA and Brown.

What is the incubation period of COVID-19?

The incubation period is the time between catching the virus and developing symptoms. This range is from **1-14 days with an average of five days**. People who have been infected but have not started having symptoms can transmit the virus so it is extremely important for us to act as if we are infected and try not to give it to anyone else. After recovering from most viral diseases, people become immune because of developing antibodies to that virus. This is the basis of vaccination which was developed by Africans in the 17th century. A recent observation in China was that about 10% of people who recovered initially tested negative for the virus but later tested positive again. This suggests that there may be carriers without symptoms so that widespread screening may become necessary. It has been estimated that not only are there asymptomatic carriers but that approximately 86% of those with the virus don't know that they are infected.

How long does coronavirus live outside the body?

Virus particles that are coughed or sneezed into the air are called droplets. People can also spread these droplets while talking. According to standard knowledge, these droplets are only in the air for a short period of time and travel only a short distance (3-6 feet) before gravity pulls them down. A single cough can produce up to 3,000 droplets and a sneeze can produce as many as 10,000 droplets. These droplets are breathed into nearby peoples' airways or fall rapidly to the ground, floor, or whatever surface they land because of gravity. Some reports state that smaller droplets (called aerosol) can remain in the air for a longer period of time (up to three hours). One researcher (who has studied the mechanics of coughs and sneezes for many years) has reported that droplets of all sizes from coughs and sneezes can travel 23-27 feet and can remain in the air for hours. These particles can fall anywhere along the path of the cough also. If people touch these surfaces and get the viruses on their hands, they can transmit the virus to themselves (by touching their eyes, nose and mouth with the infected hand) or to others (if they shake hands or touch others). **This is the reason why handwashing and sanitizing are so very important. Perhaps wearing masks may be necessary before this is over.** Researchers are not absolutely sure about how exposure to heat, cold, and sunlight affect how long the virus lives on surfaces (even though most respiratory viruses do better in cold dry climates than in warm, moist climates) but they have come up with estimates:

1. On metal surfaces, such as doorknobs, jewelry and silverware, the virus can live approximately five days,
2. On wood surfaces, such as furniture and decks, the virus can live approximately four days,

3. On plastic surfaces, the virus can live approximately 2-3 days,
4. On stainless steel surfaces, such as pots and pans, sinks and refrigerators, the virus can live 2-3 days,
5. On cardboard surfaces, such as shipping boxes, the virus can live approximately 24 hours,
6. On Copper, such as pennies and cookware, the virus can live approximately 4 hours,
7. On Aluminum, such as soda cans and tinfoil, the virus can live 2-8 hours,
8. On glass surfaces, the virus can live up to 5 days,
9. On ceramic surfaces, the virus can live up to 5 days,
10. On paper surfaces, the virus can live from a few minutes to 5 days.
11. Coronaviruses have not been found in water,
12. The presence of coronavirus in food is uncertain but the virus has been identified in human feces so it is entirely possible that it can be in food. This is another reason to thoroughly wash your hands, especially after using the bathroom. It is also a good idea to wash fruit and vegetables before cooking them.
13. Interestingly, no studies have discussed the persistence of virus on cloth and fabric. One researcher estimated that the virus can live several hours to a day on clothes. If no one in your household or surroundings has tested positive for the virus you should do your laundry as per usual. However, if someone in your household is sick or has tested positive, extra precautions should be taken with their clothes, towels, and bed linens such as wearing disposable gloves. Do not shake their clothes (may spread the virus) According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), it is acceptable to wash dirty laundry from a sick person along with dirty laundry from a well person because the detergent will kill the virus. Clothes hampers should be cleaned and disinfected after they've come in contact with the sick person's clothes. Do not hand wash these clothes. If you use a public laundromat, clean and disinfect the surfaces well, wear gloves and wash your hands.
14. I'm reminded of one of my uncles who was a germaphobe stating that money carries more germs than anything.
15. Common items such as remote controls and credit cards should be sterilized.

What can be done to prevent COVID-19?

1. The most important thing that can be done is frequent handwashing using soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Cleaning the hands with alcohol based sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) is also important. I have heard that we should wash our hands with soap and water every 4-5 times that we use hand sanitizer

2. Cover your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue or flexed elbow when you cough or sneeze. Touching elbows as a greeting is questionable when we cough into our elbows. The Wakanda Salute may be more appropriate.
3. Avoid close contact with people, maintaining a distance of at least 6 feet from others. This is called social distancing and it also applies to avoiding places where many people are closely gathered. This is especially difficult for many people of Afrikan origin because so many of us are “huggers” and also we have developed many hand shaking styles (“dap”).
4. If you don’t feel well, stay home and call your doctor. Also, avoid people who are sick.
5. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth (and some experts say don’t touch your ears) because these are the main ways that the virus enters your body. You can actually wash the virus off your hands before it enters your body through the mucus membranes of your nose, mouth and eyes. Another reason to wash your hands frequently.
6. Frequently and regularly disinfect high touch surfaces such as door handles, phones, desks, keyboards, elevator buttons, remote controls, grocery carts, and bathroom fixtures etc.
7. **Wear a mask in public places** (finally recommended by the Center for Disease Control). This may be problematic for many AUSA who are frequently racially profiled even without masks.
8. Be very careful wearing gloves. You should still wash your hands frequently, even wearing gloves. Don’t develop a false sense of security because the virus can be passed from gloves to your cell phone and credit cards.

What is the treatment for COVID-19?

Presently, **there is no definitive treatment**. Efforts are currently being made to develop a specific antiviral medication for COVID-19. These efforts are ongoing furiously. Several medications used for other illnesses have been suggested but any suggestion that these drugs work consistently is at present premature at best and reckless at worst. Efforts are also ongoing to prepare a vaccine but estimates are that this will not be completed for the next 12-18 months.

Dispelling Myths about COVID-19

1. **Black people CAN be infected**. Melanin does a lot of excellent things but there is no evidence that I can find that melanin protects against COVID-19. In fact, AUSA (Afrikans

from the United States of America) have a significantly high infection and death rate in the places that track race in the statistics.

2. So far, America has not been locked down.
3. Drinking hot lemon juice (or bleach) **does not prevent or cure the infection**. The vitamin C in the lemons can help strengthen your immune system but there is no evidence that it will prevent a COVID-19 infection. Vitamin D can also strengthen your immune system but has no direct effect on COVID-19.
4. COVID-19 can be spread in hot climates as well as temperate climates. However, most respiratory viruses do better in cold, dry environments than they do in warm, moist environments. Because COVID-19 is new, we do not know how it will behave as the weather gets warmer.
5. Taking hot baths do not prevent infection and hand dryers do not kill COVID-19.
6. There is no evidence that COVID-19 can be transmitted by mosquitoes.
7. Spraying alcohol or Chlorine all over your body will not kill the viruses if they have already entered your body. They can be harmful to your mucus membranes (mouth and nose).
8. Vaccines already in use for other illnesses do not protect against COVID-19.
9. Regularly rinsing your nose with salt water has not been shown to protect against the infection.
10. There is no evidence that eating garlic protects people from infection with coronavirus.
11. People of all ages can be infected. Older people and people with significant medical problems are more vulnerable to becoming severely ill.
12. Antibiotics work against bacteria, not viruses.
13. COVID-19 can be caught from someone who appears well.
14. COVID-19 is not just like the flu. It is more contagious than the flu and is at least 10 times more deadly.
15. Advil and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (like aspirin, aleve, Indocin, ibuprofen, naproxen, motrin and others) **do not make the illness worse**.
16. Sniffing steam from boiling water with lemons or anything else does not kill the virus.
17. Drinking more water does not flush the virus out of your throat and prevent the infection.
18. Breathing hot air from a sauna or blow dryer does not kill the virus.
19. Vitamins don't give immunity from the virus although Vitamin D does strengthen the immune system.
20. Ozone therapy causes more harm than good.

Hopefully, this factsheet, which contains information from the World Health Organization (WHO), the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and monitoring of interviews given by Dr. Anthony Fauci will be helpful. ***This information is current as of April 7, 2020.*** It will be updated as additional information becomes available.

Be safe!!!

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