

Preparing for Coronavirus: Do's and Don'ts

Prepare, don't Panic.

Here's how to protect yourself.

News about the coronavirus outbreak that started in Wuhan, China, is changing rapidly. The respiratory infection, named COVID-19 by the World Health Organization (WHO), is closely related to SARS and MERS. While most cases are in China, the disease has been diagnosed in dozens of other countries, including the United States. Public health officials have been urging people to prepare—not panic—for the new coronavirus. Those calls took on added urgency as cases of the virus have started to spike in countries outside China. Here's what you need to know to protect yourself right now:

DO wash your hands for at least 20 seconds, several times a day. Use soap and water or a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol:

Wash before cooking or eating, after using the bathroom, after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing

DO learn the symptoms, which are similar to flu:

- *Fever
- *Cough
- *Shortness of breath
- *Most cases do not start with a runny nose

DON'T travel if you have a fever. If you get sick on flight, tell crew immediately. When you get home, contact a health professional. For people in a higher-risk group—seniors and people with preexisting conditions—the agency suggests postponing nonessential travel to several countries.

DON'T touch your eyes, nose, and mouth. If you somehow meet the virus, touching your face can help it enter your body.

DO consider taking extra precautions and staying out of public places if you're over 60 years old, or have a condition, as you have a higher risk of developing the disease. Note that as of now, the highest-risk groups appear to be seniors and people with preexisting conditions like heart disease, chronic respiratory diseases, and diabetes.

DON'T go out except to see your doctor, after calling first. And if you do have to go out, avoid public transportation, taxis, and ride-sharing.

DO seek help early if you have a fever, cough, and a hard time breathing. But don't just drop into the nearest urgent care clinic. Call your doctor to find out the protocol first, to make sure you won't spread the disease to others.

DON'T hang out with your family or pets if you suspect you have the virus. In order to protect them, eat and sleep separately from them, try to stay in one room, and use a separate bathroom if possible.

DO: Prepare by making sure you have supplies at home in case someone gets sick and needs to be quarantined. This would include prescription medications for anyone in the family, other health supplies such as over-the-counter pain relievers, and disinfectants to clean household surfaces. Studies suggest that coronaviruses can live on surfaces for a few hours or up to several days. Clean them regularly with a disinfectant to kill the virus.

DON'T panic. At this point, public health officials still say the risk of becoming infected with COVID-19 is low. Taking proper precautions—wash your hands and making preparations are the best things you can do.

*****Five Steps to Wash Your Hands the Right Way*****

Washing your hands is easy, and it's one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of germs. Clean hands can stop germs from spreading from one person to another and throughout an entire community—from your home and workplace to childcare facilities and hospitals.

Follow these five steps every time.

Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.

Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.

Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the “Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end twice.

Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.

Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

