



COVID-19/NOVEL CORONAVIRUS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Brooks-TLC Hospital System, Inc. has been diligently preparing for and monitoring the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) situation that continues to unfold around the world. We are taking all steps necessary to be prepared for a potential outbreak in Western New York and our infectious disease specialists, nurses and staff are equipped to care for and treat patients with complex diseases such as COVID-19.

The outbreak was first recognized in early December 2019 in Wuhan, China, but has spread widely throughout the world, including to the United States. While COVID-19 has been widely covered in the news media and the number of cases has grown substantially, incidence in New York State remains low. Respiratory symptoms like fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, are much more likely to be caused by a seasonal illness like the flu rather than COVID-19.

It is important to note that the vast majority of those who contract COVID-19 will not require hospitalization; symptoms are often mild enough that one can recover while quarantined at home.

1. What is coronavirus disease 2019?

Coronavirus disease, now known as COVID-19, is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel coronavirus that was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China.

2. Who is most at risk for contracting COVID-19?

Those who recently traveled to an area where cases of COVID-19 are occurring are most at risk, and they should consult their doctor for the latest information. The CDC maintains a [list of countries](#) with significant COVID-19 cases.

3. How does coronavirus spread?

There are many types of human coronaviruses, including those that cause the common cold. They typically spread from an infected person through the air in tiny droplets produced when coughing or sneezing. These droplets, when they come into contact with another person's mucous membranes (e.g., mouth, nose, or eyes), can lead to infection. The virus can also be transmitted if you touch a person, an object, or a surface on which the virus has settled and then touch your mouth, nose, or eyes before washing your hands.

4. What are the symptoms?

Patients with COVID-19 have had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of:

- a. fever
- b. cough
- c. shortness of breath

Symptoms usually begin within two to three days of exposure but could take as long as 14 days to develop.

5. How can I protect myself?

The steps to protect yourself from COVID-19 are generally the same as those for the seasonal flu. See below:

- a. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- a. Avoid close contact with sick people.
- b. Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue or your elbow.
- c. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- d. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a household cleaning spray or wipe.

6. Should I purchase a facemask to protect myself?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) does **not** recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory illnesses, including the flu and COVID-19. Facemasks should be worn by healthcare workers and those who exhibit symptoms of coronavirus to help prevent the spread of the disease to others.

7. Should I be tested for COVID-19?

Call your healthcare provider if you feel sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing and have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19 or if you live in or have recently traveled to/from an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19.

Your healthcare provider will work with the state and local health departments and the CDC to determine if you need to be tested for COVID-19.

8. How is COVID-19 treated?

There is currently no FDA-approved medication for COVID-19. People infected with the virus should receive supportive care such as rest, fluids and fever control to help relieve symptoms.

9. What if I recently traveled to an area with COVID-19 cases and now have symptoms of a respiratory illness and/or fever?

If you were in a country with a COVID-19 outbreak and feel sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, within 14 days after you left, you should:

- a. Seek medical care; Call the office of your health care provider before you go, and tell them about your recent travel and symptoms. They will give you instructions on how to get care without exposing other people to your illness.
- b. While sick, avoid contact with people, don't go out and delay any travel to reduce the possibility of spreading illness to others.
- c. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.
- d. Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds to avoid spreading the virus to others.
- e. Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds immediately after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose.
- f. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

10. What are the guidelines for home isolation if I have a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19?

For those with a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19, a healthcare provider and local public health staff member will evaluate whether you can be cared for and recover at home. If home care is deemed appropriate, you will be closely monitored by staff from your local or state health department. Home isolation requirements include the following:

- a. Restrict activities outside the home, except for getting medical care. Do not go to work, school, or public areas. Avoid using public transportation, ride sharing, or taxis.
- b. Separate yourself from other people and animals in your home.
- c. If you have a medical appointment, call the healthcare provider and tell them that you have or may have COVID-19. This will help the healthcare provider's office take steps to keep other people from exposure to the virus.
- d. Wear a facemask when you are around other people (e.g., sharing a room or vehicle) or pets and before you enter a healthcare provider's office. If you are not able to wear a facemask (for example, because it causes trouble breathing), then people who live with you should not stay in the same room with you, or they should wear a facemask if they enter your room.
- e. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- f. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol and avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- g. Do not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people or pets in your home. After using these items, they should be washed thoroughly with soap and water.
- h. Clean high-touch surfaces regularly such as doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, counters and tabletops, phone and laptops.
- i. Monitor your symptoms and seek prompt medical attention if your illness is worsening.

11. Is there a vaccine currently available for COVID-19?

There is currently no vaccine available for COVID-19. According to the federal government's Coronavirus Task Force, a vaccine could potentially be available within 12-18 months.

12. How is Brooks-TLC prepared to treat infectious diseases?

We have developed procedures to make sure that people arriving for care at our ER are quickly screened for infectious diseases such as COVID-19. This includes questioning people about whether they have traveled abroad in the last three weeks or come into contact with people who are traveling abroad. Our procedures enable us to quickly isolate and screen for any possible cases of infectious disease.

13. Is Brooks-TLC implementing visitor restrictions?

To help avoid the spread of infection and to ensure a safe environment for all, we ask that those who are ill not visit our facilities unless they are seeking treatment.

14. Should I travel internationally?

CDC recommends avoiding nonessential travel to China, South Korea, Iran, Italy and Japan at this time. If you must travel:

- a. Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- b. Avoid animals and animal markets.
- c. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol and avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- d. Older adults and travelers with underlying health issues may be at risk for more severe disease.

For the most up-to-date information regarding COVID-19, please visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

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