

COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions

Last updated: 3/11/2020 at 9:00 a.m.

Topic	Q & A
Additional Resources	<p>If your question isn't answered in this FAQ, check out these resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit www.healthvermont.gov/COVID-19 • Visit CDC's FAQs • Call 2-1-1 • If your question still isn't answered, email AHS.VDHPublicCommunication@vermont.gov
Symptoms	<p>What are the symptoms of COVID-19?</p> <p>Current symptoms reported for patients with COVID-19 have included mild to severe respiratory illness. Symptoms include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever • Cough • Shortness of breath <p>Call your health care professional if you develop symptoms and have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19 or if you have recently traveled from an affected area. The list of affected areas is on our website, www.healthvermont.gov/COVID-19.</p>
	<p>What is the difference between COVID-19 and the flu?</p> <p>COVID-19 is a new disease and we are still learning about how it makes people sick.</p> <p>Cause</p> <p>COVID-19: Caused by one virus, the novel 2019 coronavirus, now called severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2, or SARS-CoV-2.</p> <p>Flu: Caused by any of several different types and strains of influenza viruses.</p>

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	<p>Transmission</p> <p>While both the flu and COVID-19 may be transmitted in similar ways, there is also a possible difference: COVID-19 might be spread through the airborne route, meaning that tiny droplets remaining in the air could cause disease in others even after the ill person is no longer near.</p> <p>Antiviral Medications</p> <p>COVID-19: Antiviral medications are currently being tested to see if they can address symptoms.</p> <p>Flu: Antiviral medications can address symptoms and sometimes shorten the duration of the illness.</p> <p>Vaccine</p> <p>COVID-19: No vaccine is available at this time, though it is in progress.</p> <p>Flu: A vaccine is available and effective to prevent some of the most dangerous types or to reduce the severity of the flu.</p> <p>For info on deaths and infections go to source: www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/coronavirus-disease-2019-vs-the-flu</p>
Vaccine	<p>Is there a vaccine for COVID-19? When will a vaccine be available?</p> <p>There is no vaccine for COVID-19, but research and work is underway to develop one.</p>
Transmission	<p>How does COVID-19 spread?</p> <p>The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet). • Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. <p>These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest). • Some spread might be possible before people show symptoms; there have been reports of this occurring with this new coronavirus, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. <p>It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.</p>
Children	<p>Are children more susceptible to the virus that causes COVID-19 compared with the general population?</p> <p>No, there is no evidence that children are more susceptible. In fact, most confirmed cases of COVID-19 reported from China have occurred in adults. Infections in children have been reported, including in very young children. From limited information published from past Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS) outbreaks, infection among children was relatively uncommon.</p> <p>Children should engage in usual preventive actions to avoid infection, including cleaning hands often using soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer, avoiding people who are sick, and staying up to date on vaccinations, including influenza vaccine.</p>
Prevention	<p>How can you help prevent getting the virus?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid close contact with people who are sick. • Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. • Stay home when you are sick.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. • Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe. • Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. • If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
Face Masks	<p>Should I wear a face mask when I go out in public?</p> <p>The Department of Health does not recommend people wear a face mask in public.</p> <p>If you are sick: If you are ill, stay home to rest and avoid going out into public places. If you are ill and plan to see a doctor, you should call the office before your visit. Your doctor can provide guidance on how to avoid spreading illness, such as what steps to take while traveling to their facility and upon arrival, and whether you should wear a mask.</p> <p>If you are not sick: You do not need to wear a mask. Face masks are more effective at “keeping germs in,” but they are not as effective at “keeping germs out.”</p>
Pets	<p>Can pets get sick from COVID-19?</p> <p>To date, CDC has not received any reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19. At this time, there is no evidence that pets, including dogs, can spread COVID-19. There is no reason to think that any animals, including pets, in the United States might be a source of infection with this new coronavirus. However, it is important to include pets in your family’s preparedness planning efforts, including having a two-week supply of pet food and pet medicines available. For more information on preparing for your pet, please visit www.cdc.gov/healthypets/emergencies/pet-disaster-prep-kit.html.</p>

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Monitoring	<p>How many people are being monitored in Vermont?</p> <p>The number of people being monitored is updated every day on our website www.healthvermont.gov/COVID-19. The number changes rapidly as people return to Vermont from affected areas and as others complete the 14 day monitoring period.</p>
	<p>What is monitoring?</p> <p>Monitoring means asking someone who has returned from an affected area to check their temperature every day, watch for symptoms, and for some people, asking them to stay home. Identifying information is not available to the public.</p> <p>The number of people being monitored is updated every day on our website, in addition to detailed “Information for People Under Monitoring”: www.healthvermont.gov/COVID-19.</p>
Lab Testing	<p>Who is getting tested?</p> <p>If you are ill, call your health care provider to find out if you should be seen for an evaluation and consideration of testing. Health care providers may decide to test the following people for COVID-19:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and is hospitalized. • People – whether hospitalized or in an outpatient setting -- who have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and a travel history to an affected area or had close contact with another person who tested positive for COVID-19. • Anyone who is sick and their provider believes their symptoms could be due to COVID-19. <p>The state will ensure that anyone who meets the medical requirements for testing for COVID-19 can do so at no cost. The number Vermonters who have tested negative for COVID-19 is updated daily on our website (www.healthvermont.gov/COVID-19).</p>

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	<p>Is Vermont conducting tests for COVID-19?</p> <p>Yes, the Vermont Department of Health Laboratory is running tests for COVID-19.</p> <p>The number of Vermonters who have tested negative for COVID-19 is updated daily on our website (www.healthvermont.gov/COVID-19).</p>
	<p>How long is the turnaround for testing?</p> <p>Results from the Vermont Department of Health Laboratory will be available in 24-48 hours. Test results will be reported by the Health Department Laboratory to the hospital or clinical lab where the test was collected. Individuals should wait for their health care provider to notify them of their test results. The number of Vermonters who were tested for COVID-19 is updated daily on our website (www.healthvermont.gov/COVID-19).</p>
	<p>Where is testing being done?</p> <p>At this time, the Vermont Department of Health Laboratory is doing the testing for COVID-19.</p> <p>The number of Vermonters who were tested for COVID-19 is updated daily on our website (www.healthvermont.gov/COVID-19).</p>
	<p>What does a presumptive positive test mean?</p> <p>A presumptive positive means the test needs to be confirmed by the CDC.</p>
	<p>Is there a cost to people who are tested?</p> <p>No, there is no cost for individuals for the test.</p>
State Response	<p>What is Vermont doing?</p> <p>The Health Department activated its Health Operations Center in early February to work on this response.</p>

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	<p>On February 29, the Governor directed Vermont Emergency Management to form a task force representing all sectors of the state to develop a comprehensive response plan. The task force will also develop a communications plan to ensure steady information flow and resources are available throughout all sectors of the public, including schools, emergency responders and local government. The task force will work closely with the Health Department to make plans and provide guidance.</p> <p>On March 11 the state activated its Emergency Operations Center to support the Health Department's response.</p>
	<p>What is the Health Department doing?</p> <p>Overall, the State of Vermont has several plans in place for preparing for and responding to emergencies, including pandemic and epidemic disease outbreaks.</p> <p>The Health Department is working closely with the state's health care providers and hospitals, local governments, and across state programs and agencies. We opened our Health Operations Center in early February to coordinate response efforts and resources.</p> <p>The Health Department is monitoring people who have returned to Vermont from an affected area and testing those who fit certain criteria.</p> <p>The Health Department conducts outreach to close contacts of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, provides guidance to them about staying home and monitoring their health. The Department stays in regular communication with them during their monitoring period.</p> <p>In addition, we are maintaining updated and current information on our website, healthvermont.gov/COVID19. This includes syndication of the CDC website, essentially live streaming their information on our site.</p>

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Specific Audience: Businesses	<p>What should business owners in Vermont do?</p> <p>Please see the section of healthvermont.gov/covid19 on businesses.</p> <p>This includes “Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019” (CDC) www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-business-response.html</p> <p>Right now, businesses in Vermont can: Actively encourage sick employees to stay home; separate sick employees; emphasize staying home when sick, respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene by all employees; perform routine environmental cleaning and advise employees before traveling to take certain steps</p> <p>The severity of illness or how many people will fall ill from COVID-19 is unknown at this time. Employers should plan to be able to respond in a flexible way to varying levels of severity and be prepared to refine their business response plans as needed.</p> <p>There is also guidance for COVID-19 Guidance for Food and Lodging Businesses and posters that can be downloaded.</p>
Specific Audience: Schools and Child Cares	<p>What should child cares and schools in Vermont do?</p> <p>See the section of healthvermont.gov/covid19 on schools, child care programs and colleges which includes:</p> <p>“Interim Guidance for Administrators of U.S. Childcare Programs and K-12 Schools to Plan, Prepare, and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019” (CDC) www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-for-schools.html</p> <p>And Vermont-specific guidance:</p>

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	<p>School Closure and Dismissal During a Novel Coronavirus Outbreak: Technical Guidance for Local School Officials</p> <p>Early Childhood Care and Education Programs Closure And Dismissal During a Novel Coronavirus Outbreak: Technical Guidance for Child Care, Head Start and public and private Prekindergarten Education Programs</p>
Specific Audience: Pregnant Women, Breastfeeding, and Children	<p>What should pregnant or breastfeeding women and children do?</p> <p>There is not currently information from published scientific reports about susceptibility of pregnant women to COVID-19. Pregnant women experience immunologic and physiologic changes which might make them more susceptible to viral respiratory infections, including COVID-19.</p> <p>There is no evidence that children are more susceptible to COVID-19. In fact, most confirmed cases of COVID-19 reported from China have occurred in adults. Infections in children have been reported, including in very young children. There is an ongoing investigation to determine more about this outbreak. This is a rapidly evolving situation and information will be updated as it becomes available.</p> <p>Information about children and pregnant women and COVID-19 is available at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/pregnant-women.html.</p>
Specific Audience: Colleges and Universities	<p>What should colleges and universities in Vermont do?</p> <p>Please see “Interim Guidance for Administrators of US Institutions of Higher Education to Plan, Prepare, and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019” (CDC) at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-ihe-response.html.</p>
Specific Audience: Colleges and	<p>What should colleges and universities who are planning student foreign travel do?</p>

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Universities – Student Foreign Travel	Please see “Guidance for Student Foreign Travel for Institutions of Higher Education” (CDC) at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/student-foreign-travel.html
Specific Audience: Community-based and Faith-based Organizations	<p>What should Vermont community-based and faith-based organizations do?</p> <p>Please see “Interim Guidance: Get Your Community- and Faith-Based Organizations Ready for Coronavirus Disease 2019” (CDC) at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-community-faith-organizations.html</p>
Preventing Spread in Communities: Mass Gatherings	<p>What should people planning mass gatherings in Vermont do?</p> <p>At this time (3/10/2020) the VT Department of Health:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is not recommending closure or cancellation of mass gathering events 2. It is reasonable for older adults and persons with underlying health conditions to consider not attending a mass gathering event. 3. Our guidance is subject to change based on the evolving situation. <p>Here is a link for more information: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/index.html</p>
Possible Exposures	<p>What do I do if I believe I had close contact with someone who has COVID-19?</p> <p>Anyone who believes they had contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 should call the Health Department at 802-863-7240. If you develop symptoms, call your health care provider right away.</p>
	What is the Health Department doing about people who have returned from travel to affected areas?

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	<p>As of March 4, following guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, travelers returning from China, Italy, South Korea and Iran should stay home and monitor their health for 14 days after returning to the United States. Travelers returning from Japan should monitor their health for 14 days after returning to the United States.</p> <p>All travelers who have returned from those countries in the last 14 days should call the Health Department at 802-863-7240.</p>
	<p>Why were people returning from travel allowed to be in the community and now others are being told to stay at home?</p> <p>As you have seen in the news, this situation is constantly evolving. As cases increase globally in certain areas, the CDC is updating its guidance based on the risk. We follow their guidance to protect the health of Vermonters.</p>
	<p>Should I be tested for COVID-19?</p> <p>In Vermont, the following people can be tested:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anyone who has symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and is hospitalized • Anyone – whether hospitalized or in an outpatient setting -- who has symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and has travel history to an affected area -or- has had close contact with another person who has tested positive for COVID-19. • Anyone who is seriously ill and their health care provider has determined a test is needed <p>A person's health care provider arranges for testing. DO NOT call the Health Department for testing.</p>
	<p>Should I go to a specific health care professional?</p> <p>Feel free to reach out to the provider most convenient to you.</p>

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	<p>If you have traveled to an affected area or have had close contact with a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, and you have symptoms of fever, cough or shortness of breath, we would like you to call ahead however (if medically possible) and alert the provider that you need evaluation for novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Please also alert the Health Department by calling 802-863-7240 (24/7).</p>
	<p>I traveled through an airport in one of the affected countries. Do I need to notify the Health Department?</p> <p>According to CDC, layovers at airports in destinations with level 3 travel notices are included in CDC's recommendation to avoid nonessential travel. If a layover is unavoidable, CDC recommends that travelers not leave the airport.</p> <p>As of March 10, travelers with layovers in level 3 countries returning to Vermont will follow the same monitoring guidelines as if they are a returning traveler from that country.</p>
National Numbers	<p>How many U.S. cases of COVID-19?</p> <p>The updated national numbers are available at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-in-us.html.</p>
Travel	<p>Where is it safe to travel internationally?</p> <p>Guidance for international travelers, including for business, is evolving. Stay up to date on the latest COVID-19 travel advisories from CDC (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html). This page includes information for travelers and travel related industries, including by air and by ship.</p> <p>You can also check CDC's FAQs for Travelers (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/faqs.html).</p>
	<p>What should I do if I have been traveling to an affected area?</p> <p>Returning travelers whose last day in China, Italy, South Korea or Iran was March 4 or afterwards should stay home and monitor their health for 14 days after returning to the United States. Travelers returning</p>

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	<p>from Japan should monitor their health for 14 days after returning to the United States.</p> <p>All travelers who have returned from those countries in the last 14 days should call the Health Department at 802-863-7240 to discuss monitoring. If you develop symptoms of shortness of breath, cough or fever, contact your health care provider right away.</p>
Sick people	<p>I feel sick/think I may have COVID-19? What should I do?</p> <p>Stay home and call your health care provider. DO NOT call the Health Department, unless it is to inform them of travel to an affected country or a close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case.</p>
Cleaning	<p>What types of disinfectants should I be using to clean?</p> <p>This CDC document has a section on cleaning: Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), February 2020, found here: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-business-response.html</p> <p>The CDC also says: For disinfection, review this list of products with EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens, found here: https://www.americanchemistry.com/Novel-Coronavirus-Fighting-Products-List.pdf</p>
Long-term care facilities or group homes	<p>What should people in long-term care facilities or group homes do?</p> <p>These resources are all under the long-term care facilities section of healthvermont.gov/covid19.</p> <p>Vermont Health Advisory: Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) in Long-Term Care Facilities:</p>

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	<p>https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/HAN-LTCF-3-4-2020.pdf</p> <p>CDC: Strategies to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 in Long-Term Care Facilities: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/prevent-spread-in-long-term-care-facilities.html</p> <p>Facilities may want to ask visitors to help protect others by answering a few questions: https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/COVID19-Visitor-Screening-Tool-Congregate-Settings.pdf</p> <p>The Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living also has additional info on its website: https://dail.vermont.gov/novel-coronavirus-information</p>
Family of Travelers	<p>Do family members of people who traveled to an affected area need to stay at home?</p> <p>No. Having been in a home of a person under monitoring and is not ill is not considered an exposure to novel coronavirus. Only someone who is actively sick with COVID-19 can spread the illness to others.</p>
Finding Health Care Provider	<p>How can someone get help finding a health care provider?</p> <p>2-1-1 lists community clinics and hospital-connected clinics around the state, and as a standard on calls where the person is seeking a referral to a provider, staff ask about a source of health insurance and advise the client that they can also contact their insurer for a referral to private providers. 2-1-1 does not list individual primary care physicians in their database.</p>
Viability of COVID-19	<p>How long is the virus viable on surfaces?</p>

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	<p>Per CDC: Current evidence suggests that novel coronavirus may remain viable for hours to days on surfaces made from a variety of materials. Cleaning of visibly dirty surfaces followed by disinfection is a best practice measure for prevention of COVID-19 and other viral respiratory illnesses in households and community settings.</p> <p>You can see more information on this page of the CDC website: Interim Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations for U.S. Households with Suspected or Confirmed Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) (found here: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/home/cleaning-disinfection.html)</p>
Contact with Person Under Monitoring	<p>What if I've had contact with someone who is under monitoring?</p> <p>There is no identifiable risk to someone who has been in a home or in close contact with a person under monitoring and is not ill. This is not considered an exposure to novel coronavirus. Only someone who is actively sick with COVID-19 can spread the illness to others.</p>
Request to Visit Meeting/Group	<p>Can someone do a presentation about COVID-19 for my group?</p> <p>The Health Department is not able to present at or attend meetings right now, because our resources are dedicated to other aspects of protecting public health during the novel coronavirus outbreak. This may change in the future if we can bring in other resources.</p>
Cleaning	<p>What disinfectants can I use to protect against the virus?</p> <p>Here is a link to an EPA list of anti-microbial products for use against novel coronavirus: https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-03/documents/sars-cov-2-list_03-03-2020.pdf</p>

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Travel	<p>Is okay to travel to U.S. destination? Do I need to be quarantined when I return?</p> <p>There are currently no travel restrictions for <i>fill in U.S. destination</i>, or specific health-related recommendations upon return. CDC has answers to Frequently Asked Questions about travel here: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/faqs.html Because guidance keeps evolving, you can watch that page for the latest information.</p>
Cases	<p>Can you tell me more information about a patient with COVID-19?</p> <p>The first person in Vermont tested as a “presumptive positive” on March 7 in Bennington County. In order to protect patient privacy, we can’t provide details about specific cases. We are focusing our efforts on tracing any close contact patients may have had with others. We will keep the public informed as we are able, including any known risk to the public.</p>
Dental Offices	<p>What should dentists know about COVID19?</p> <p>Here is guidance specific to COVID-19: https://www.ada.org/en/publications/ada-news/2020-archive/february/ada-releases-coronavirus-handout-for-dentists-based-on-cdc-guidelines You can also look to the COVID-19 webpage on our website, at www.healthvermont.gov/covid19, where up-to-date guidance on these issues can be found, including status for travelers to affected countries.</p>
Okay to Return to Work	<p>Can the Health Department provide documentation that I can go to work?</p> <p>The Health Department does not have a role in “clearing” people who have been ill or traveled for return to work. The Health Department can discuss this with you if you traveled to an affected country or had contact with someone ill with COVID-19 and have completed monitoring.</p>

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Older Adults/people with chronic medical conditions	<p>Are there any recommendations for older people?</p> <p>Some people are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness, including older adults and people with chronic medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes or lung disease. According to the CDC, these people should take extra precautions including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stocking up on supplies• Avoiding crowds• Avoiding cruise travel and non-essential air travel• Staying away from others who are sick <p>Read the CDC's full guidance on People At Risk for Serious Illness from COVID-19.</p>