Debunking 20 Myths About Coronavirus (COVID-19)

This guidance document will continue to be updated as the COVID-19 situation evolves. Visit www.coronavirusnetwork.org for the latest information, updates and resources.

1. If you get coronavirus, it is a death sentence

The coronavirus can cause life-threatening illness and death, but getting the coronavirus is far from a death sentence. The vast majority of COVID-19 cases are mild and do not require going to the hospital. Young and healthy people are more likely to have mild cases. That being said, right now the best guess is that about 1% to 3% of people who get sick with COVID-19 will die.

Because COVID-19 is more deadly for older people, this percentage increases by age group. For instance, it is expected that 2% to 5% of 65 to 75 year olds infected with the coronavirus will die while 4% to 10% of 75 to 85 year olds infected with the virus will die. It is likely that current estimates overestimate the deadliness of COVID-19 because many people who survive with mild to no symptoms are never tested and people with severe cases are more likely to be tested. As testing becomes more widespread, we will likely have a better estimate about how deadly the coronavirus is.

2. There is nothing more we can do to stop the spread of coronavirus

Even with the increasing number of people getting COVID-19, there are still many things we can do to stop the spread of the coronavirus. Many of these things involve changing our behaviors. You should: wash your hands with soap frequently, avoid touching your face in public, wear a face mask in public, and stay at home when you feel sick. If we slow the spread of the coronavirus, we help hospitals not have too many people to care for at once and protect those who are the most at risk of developing serious illness and dying from the coronavirus.

3. Wearing a facemask is necessary to protect yourself from getting infected

It is necessary to wear a facemask, not just to protect yourself, but to protect others. Although face masks may help prevent you from getting the coronavirus, they are even better at preventing you from getting other people sick in case you are infected. Most people with the coronavirus can spread it for two days before they begin to notice they are sick. Also, some people with the coronavirus never get any symptoms. Because people can spread the coronavirus without realizing they have it, it is necessary that we all wear face masks in public.

It is important to know that wearing a face mask does not substitute the need to practice social distancing (staying at least 6 feet away from other people) because face masks are not 100% effective at reducing the spread. Wearing a face mask and social distancing work together as strategies to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.
4. **Chinese people are most likely to have the coronavirus, so you should avoid them.**

There is no truth to this statement. Although the coronavirus originated in Wuhan, China, there is no race or ethnicity of people that is more likely to get or spread the coronavirus. You get the coronavirus by being exposed to someone else who has it, regardless of their race, ethnicity or national origin. The coronavirus does not discriminate who it infects, and neither should you.

5. **If you have coronavirus, "you'll know"**

The only way to truly know if you are infected with the coronavirus is to get tested. You can have the coronavirus without showing any symptoms at all. You can also spread the virus without having any symptoms. Most people infected with the coronavirus will be contagious for two days before they begin to show any symptoms. In addition, many of the symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to the flu and the common cold, such as fever or a cough. It is easy to mistake one for the other. Anyone who has had contact with someone who has tested positive for the coronavirus, or is beginning to feel sick, should seek out a test. To learn more about testing and how to access a test, please see the [COVID-19 Testing FAQ](#) resource.

6. **Once I get the coronavirus and get better, I will be immune from it**

After successfully fighting off an infection from a virus, our body naturally produces ‘antibodies’ that target that specific virus. Many people who recover from COVID-19 develop specific antibodies that target the coronavirus. Currently, it is believed that these antibodies do provide some protection from being infected again. However, we are still in the process of learning how well these antibodies protect against reinfection, if everybody who recovers from COVID-19 gets them, and how long they last in our system. If you recover from COVID-19, you should continue taking all recommended precautions, such as wearing a mask in public, social distancing, and washing your hands frequently.

7. **COVID-19 is just like the flu, but the flu kills more people.**

It is true that some symptoms of the flu and coronavirus are similar and they both can be spread through coughs and sneezes. However, the flu and COVID-19 are totally different illnesses caused by different viruses. The flu vaccine will not protect you from the coronavirus and there is currently no vaccine for the coronavirus. The coronavirus is a new virus that we are still learning about as it continues to spread. However, the coronavirus appears to be deadlier than the flu, as it has contributed to the deaths of more people in the United States in three months than the flu did in the 2018-2019 flu season.

8. **Coronavirus was made by someone in a lab.**

There is no evidence that the coronavirus was made in a lab. Scientists that have started to study the coronavirus say it resembles other viruses that have jumped from animals to humans. Many viruses that affect humans originate in animals. These viruses change naturally so that they can infect not only animals but humans as well.
9. A vaccine for coronavirus could be ready soon, maybe within a few months.
There are many companies now working on a vaccine for the coronavirus. Though there have been promising developments, it will take time for a vaccine to become widely available. Vaccine development requires time for testing to make sure the vaccine will be effective, as well as safe for people to use. Most likely, a vaccine will not be available until some time in 2021.

10. The coronavirus only kills the elderly, so younger people don't need to be as worried.
Coronavirus is more dangerous for people who are elderly (people over the age of 65) and for people with chronic health conditions, but this does not mean that young and healthy people are not at risk of getting really sick from COVID-19. Although it is rare, there are numerous examples of young and healthy people needing to be hospitalized, and even dying, due to the coronavirus. To protect their health, young and healthy people should take all the recommended precautions, such as wearing a mask in public. More importantly, young and healthy people should take these precautions to protect people who are the most at risk of getting really sick from the coronavirus. By maintaining 6 feet of distance from others in public, wearing a mask in public, and staying at home when sick, young people can reduce the coronavirus' spread to more vulnerable people.

11. The coronavirus is strengthening into a deadlier strain
There is no evidence that suggests the coronavirus has changed into a deadlier strain. Modern technology gives scientists an ability to monitor and study the virus to watch for any changes.

12. You need to be with an infected person for at least 10 minutes to get the coronavirus
Although spending more time with an infected person may increase the likelihood of getting the coronavirus, all it takes to become infected is to come in contact with "droplets" that come from the cough or sneeze of an infected person. This can happen in the matter of a second by inhaling or ingesting droplets containing the coronavirus through your nose or mouth. Droplets can travel up to six feet when someone sneezes or coughs without covering their mouth or wearing a face mask. Though it is not the main way people get the coronavirus, you can also get it by touching a surface with the coronavirus on it and then touching your face. This means you can get coronavirus without having direct contact with an infected person.

13. Using any type of alcohol will kill the virus on my hands or body.
Vodka or other alcoholic beverages will not kill the virus. Alcoholic-based hand sanitizer solutions must be at least 70% alcohol to be effective at killing the virus.
14. Banning all travel will prevent spread of the virus
Avoiding unnecessary travel, especially when you are sick, can help prevent the spread of coronavirus. However, total travel bans can stop people from reporting cases and governments from sharing information about their outbreaks. If everyone is stopped from traveling, an unintended consequence may be that volunteers and supplies are prevented from getting to where they need to go. In addition, this could create undue burdens on those attempting to seek out needed medical care.

15. It’s ok to go to work or school if I have a mild case of COVID-19
By going to work or school when you may have a mild case of coronavirus, you put others at risk. This is especially true if you come into contact with someone who is elderly or has health problems since they are the most likely to develop serious cases of COVID-19. If you are feeling sick, you should get tested and isolate yourself at home, avoiding all contact with others. To learn more about testing for COVID-19, please see the COVID-19 Testing FAQ resource. To learn how to effectively isolate yourself and prevent the spread of the coronavirus, please see the “I Tested Positive for COVID-19, What Now?” resource.

16. When the summer comes the coronavirus will be stopped
We can hope that warming weather will slow or halt the spread of the coronavirus, but there is no evidence that this is true. The virus is spreading in both cold and warm weather climates. Those currently studying the disease say their research is too early to predict how the coronavirus will respond to changing weather.

17. Eating garlic can help prevent infection with the coronavirus
Garlic is reported to have some antimicrobial properties. However, there is no evidence that eating garlic, or any food, herb or drink, prevents coronavirus. Eating healthy and drinking plenty of fluids are general ways to reduce risks of serious illness.

Despite it being marketed by some as a treatment for COVID-19, there is no independent scientific evidence that shows that taking hydroxychloroquine either prevents you from getting the coronavirus or cures you of the coronavirus. Hydroxychloroquine should only be taken if prescribed by your doctors since it is a potent drug that carries many negative side effects. Many doctors today prescribe it to treat patients with Lupus and using it for COVID-19 may cause shortages for people who depend on it.

19. I should buy products and medications advertised as being “Anti-COVID-19” or “Anti-Coronavirus.”
Currently, there are no widely available treatments for COVID-19 that have been approved by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) and there will be no “cure” until a vaccine is
developed. No medications, supplements, or other products can cure or prevent you from getting COVID-19. Anyone advertising products as being “anti-COVID-19” or “anti-coronavirus” are simply trying to scam you and make money off your fear. Many of these products, since they have not been regulated, might also have negative consequences for your health.

20. Can pets get and spread coronavirus?
While there have been reports of small amounts of the coronavirus found in dogs and cats, there are no reports of coronavirus spreading through dogs or cats to people. It is still a good idea to treat pets as you would other family members you live with and restrict contact with them if you are sick. In addition, pets should practice social distancing. They should not interact with other people or animals, like at dog parks, for example. Also, you should wash your hands with soap and water after coming into contact with pets.

Information for this FAQ came from:
US Center for Disease Control (CDC): https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus
The World Health Organization (WHO): https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus
Breanna Lathrop, DNP, MPH, FNP-BC: https://goodsamatlanta.org/team/breanna-lathrop/
Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases: https://www.niaid.nih.gov/about/anthony-s-fauci-md-bio
Hannah Devlin Science Correspondent, The Guardian: https://www.theguardian.com/profile/hannah-devlin
Stuart Weston, PhD University of Maryland School of Medicine: https://www.medschool.umaryland.edu/profiles/Weston-Stuart/

This FAQ was written by the Coronavirus Support Network, a project of Sostento Inc. a US based 501c3 federally recognized nonprofit. To join the network visit www.coronavirusnetwork.org.

Please note that the guidance in this document does not substitute for the recommendations of your healthcare provider.