

Debunking 19 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

Most cases of coronavirus are mild and do not require going to the hospital. Some people show no symptoms at all. Young people are more likely to have mild cases. The elderly or those with lung problems or other existing health problems are most likely to have severe cases. It is too early to know the exact percent of people who will die if they get coronavirus, but the best guess is between 1% - 4% and will depend on your age, pre existing medical conditions, and care you receive when you are sick.

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

Even with the increasing number of people getting coronavirus, there are still many things we can do to stop the spread by changing our behavior: by washing our hands, avoiding touching our face in public and staying home when we feel sick. If we slow the spread of coronavirus we help hospitals not have too many people to care for at once.

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

While there are some ways masks help protect you from coronavirus, it is not necessarily useful all the time. Paper masks can help you stop from touching your mouth and nose. A mask is a reminder to others during this time we should be taking caution to keep each other healthy. If you take the proper precautions you can prevent spreading of coronavirus. In many situations you can stay safe without a mask.

There are special masks called "N95 respirators" that can greatly reduce the spread of the virus for medical staff caring for the sick. If you are to use a facemask, it must be applied and worn properly for it to work. People require training to properly fit N95 respirators around their noses, cheeks and chins to ensure that no air can sneak around the edges of the mask; and wearers must also learn to check the equipment for damage after each use. These masks are very important to protect health workers.

4. Asian or Middle Eastern people are most likely to have it, you should avoid them.

There is no truth to this statement. There is no race or ethnicity of people that are more likely to get coronavirus. You get the coronavirus by being exposed to someone else who has it, no matter their background. The virus outbreak did begin in China, and so people who had traveled to China were more likely to have the disease during the start of the outbreak. Coronavirus does not discriminate based on race or ethnicity and neither should you.

5. You can get the coronavirus if you eat at a Chinese restaurant

The coronavirus doesn't just affect people of Chinese descent, it affects all people. Fearing people of certain descent will not keep you safe. Chinese restaurants and business do not pose any more of a threat than any other restaurant or business.

6. If you have coronavirus, "you'll know"

You can have coronavirus without showing any symptoms at all. Many of the symptoms of coronavirus are similar to the flu and the common cold such as fever or a cough. If you have difficulty breathing or persistent high fever, then you should seek medical treatment. The only way to know if you have coronavirus is to get tested for it.

7. Coronavirus 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 coronavirus are totally different illnesses. The flu vaccine will not protect you from coronavirus. The coronavirus is a new disease that we are still learning about as it continues to spread. The world will not know how deadly the coronavirus is compared to the flu for many months. A lot depends on how we respond to it.

8. Coronavirus was made by someone in a lab.

There is no evidence that the virus was made in a lab. Scientists that have started to study the coronavirus say it resembles others that 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 to coronavirus, but it will take time to develop. A vaccine requires time for testing to make sure it will be effective, as well as safe for people to use. Most likely a vaccine won't be available until some time in 2021.

10. Coronavirus only kills the elderly, so younger people don't need to be as worried.

Coronavirus is more dangerous for people who are elderly, but it does not mean young people should not be concerned and take precautions. All people who have lung problems such as asthma can also become seriously ill. Young people can help protect the elderly by reporting if they feel like and following quarantine instructions to keep the virus from spreading to people who are more likely to get very sick.

11. The coronavirus came from people eating bat soup

There are some videos online circulating that show individuals eating bat soup or other exotic animals. There is no evidence that the virus started from people eating bats. It may take years to determine the source of the coronavirus like it did with HIV / AIDS and Ebola.

12. The virus is strengthening into a more deadly strain

There is nothing to suggest the virus has changed into a more deadly strain. Modern technology gives scientists an ability to monitor and study the virus to watch for any changes.

13. You need to be with an infected person for at least 10 minutes to get the virus

All it takes to get the coronavirus is to come in contact with “droplets” that come from a cough or sneeze. The droplets can survive on surfaces that you might touch even when the person it came from is not around. There is no set amount of time you need to be with someone to spread the virus, in fact you may not even come into direct contact with them, just the droplets

14. Using any type of alcohol will kill the virus on my hands or body.

Vodka or other alcoholic beverages will not kill the virus. To kill the virus you must clean your hands with soap or use appropriate hand sanitizer.

15. 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 you stop everyone from traveling that could prevent volunteers and supplies from getting to where they need to go.

16. It's ok to go to work or school if I have a mild case of coronavirus

By going to work or school when you are sick and may have a mild case of coronavirus you put others at risk. This is especially true if you can come in contact with someone who is elderly or has health problems it could have deadly consequences.

17. When the summer comes the virus will be stopped

We can hope that warming weather will slow or halt the spread of 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 virus will respond to changing weather.

18. 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.

19. Can pets get and spread coronavirus?

While there have been reports of small amounts of the virus reported in dogs, there are no reports of coronavirus spreading through dogs to people. It is still a good idea to wash your hands with soap and water after contact with pets. This protects you against other diseases.

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>

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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.

