

## What is Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory virus that can spread from person to person. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a new type of the same virus that causes the common cold. It was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China in December 2019.

## How does COVID-19 Spread?

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person. This can be by getting the microscopic virus into your nose/mouth/eyes when someone who is infected coughs or sneezes in close proximity to you OR by the virus being left on surfaces like doorknobs, elevator buttons, and countertops and then transmitted to your nose/mouth/eyes when you touch the surface and then your face.

## What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Patients with COVID-19 have had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of, fever, cough & shortness of breath.

## How can I protect myself?

The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to the virus. While public health authorities are working to produce a vaccine, as of March 2020, there is no vaccine to prevent Coronavirus Disease 2019.

The best way to avoid exposure is to follow good public health and hygiene practices that should be done every day regardless of the existence of this new disease. Things like:

- **Avoid touching your face.**
- **Wash your hands** vigorously with soap and water multiple times a day (use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol when soap and water are not available).
- **Avoid close contact with people who are sick.**
- **Clean surfaces in your home/office.**
- **Practice social distancing.** Avoid common practices like handshaking.
- A facemask will do little to nothing to protect you if you are not sick and are just having normal public interactions with others. People hoarding facemasks as a precaution simply reduces the availability for healthcare workers who need them due to working in enclosed spaces and in close proximity to ill people.

## What should I do if I am sick?

In addition to continuing to do all of the above:

- **Stay home when you are sick.**
- **Consult your physician or an urgent care.** Call ahead and describe your symptoms. Use the hospital emergency room and ambulances only for true emergencies.
- **Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue,** then throw the tissue in the trash. If no tissue is available, contain your cough or sneeze in the bend of your elbow.
- If one is available, wear a facemask if you are sick and need to go out in public (e.g. travel to the physician).

**For more information about COVID-19 and all emergency planning, visit:**

**BerksDES.com**

