COVID-19 FACTS & INFORMATION

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In December 2019, health officials found that people in Wuhan, China, were getting sick from an unknown respiratory illness. Scientists determined it was a new, or "novel," coronavirus and named it COVID-19. Since its discovery, the virus has spread to over 95 countries and territories, including the U.S., and has infected over 100,000 people worldwide, and killed more than 3,000 people.

U.S. and global health officials are keeping a close watch on the disease and has recommended not to travel to places where COVID-19 is being transmitted unless absolutely necessary.
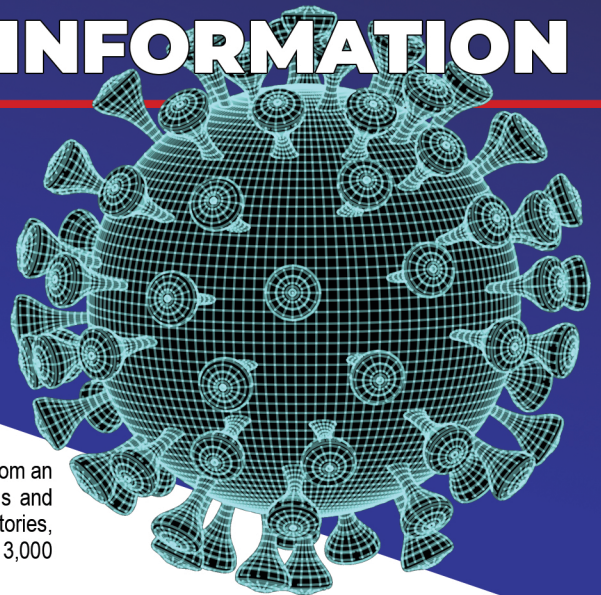
What are the symptoms? How does it spread?

Symptoms of COVID-19 are usually fever, cough, body aches, and can include headache or even difficulty breathing. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Coronaviruses in general can be spread through the air by coughing and sneezing and through close personal contact, such as shaking hands. Coronaviruses can also be spread by touching an object or surface with the virus on it and then touching your eyes, mouth or nose.

Who can be tested and how is COVID-19 diagnosed?

Much like testing for the flu, your healthcare provider can order your test and will obtain a swab or sample from your respiratory tract and send that sample to their local department of public health. There, your sample will undergo a test called RT-PCR, an advanced test looking for the genetic code of COVID-19. The CDC will then confirm those results which can take up to 5 days.

How is COVID-19 treated?

As of yet, there is no known treatment or vaccine for COVID-19. Several studies are underway investigating the effectiveness of various antiviral medications on the virus, but it will be some time before those results are confirmed. If you travel to an area with an outbreak of COVID-19 - or if you are in close contact with someone who has the disease - and you develop symptoms, you should contact your doctor before going to the emergency room to minimize the risk of spreading the disease or being unnecessarily exposed to COVID-19.

How can I protect myself from COVID-19?

The best way to prevent infection from COVID-19 is to avoid being exposed to it. That means staying away from outbreak areas and people who have been infected.

You can also take everyday precautions that help prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses:

- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Do not come in close contact with people who are sick and stay at home when you are sick.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, throw it away, and then wash your hands.

Where can I get more information?

Center for Disease Control: www.cdc.gov
John Hopkins World Infection Map: http://bit.ly/3cLAFEL
Texas Department of Health: dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/
World Health Organization: www.who.int.
WorldOMeter: https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/