

# CORONAVIRUS: WHAT TO DO IF I FEEL SICK?

If you have a cough, a fever or difficulty breathing, and you are worried that you may have COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus, here are recommendations from Lisa Maragakis, M.D., M.P.H., senior director of infection prevention at Johns Hopkins, on what to do, step by step.

**“If your symptoms are severe or you feel like you need medical care, call before you go to a doctor’s office, urgent care center or emergency room. Describe your symptoms over the phone.”**

**Lisa Lockerd Maragakis,  
M.D., M.P.H.**



## STEP 1.

### ► STAY AT HOME AND CALL A HEALTH CARE PROVIDER

Unless it is an emergency, to reduce your risk of catching or spreading illness, stay home if you feel sick, even if your symptoms are mild. Do not go to work, school or public places, and avoid public transportation.

If your symptoms are severe or you feel like you need medical care, call before you go to a doctor’s office, urgent care center or emergency room. Describe your symptoms over the phone.

**If you have a medical emergency, call 911 and tell the dispatcher about your symptoms and recent travel history.**

## STEP 3.

### ► FOLLOW YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER’S INSTRUCTIONS

Based on your answers to these questions, the care provider will provide instructions over the phone. You will be told if you need to be evaluated, and if so, what to do next. Based on your risk for COVID-19, your health care provider may recommend that you:

- Continue to monitor your health and call back if you develop a fever or respiratory symptoms.
- Stay home and await further instructions.
- Report to a designated medical care facility for evaluation and treatment. It’s best to go alone to your appointment. Do not bring children or other family members unless you need assistance.
- Go to a clinic or emergency department if you have more severe symptoms, such as higher fever and severe shortness of breath.

## STEP 2.

### ► ANSWER QUESTIONS TO DETERMINE YOUR RISK

When you call a health care facility, you will be asked about your risks for COVID-19. Risk factors include recent travel to certain countries or areas of the U.S., or exposure to an infected person.

For instance, people calling Johns Hopkins Health System hospitals or clinics are asked:

- Have you had close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus? (Close contact means having been within 6 feet of that person for an extended time or being exposed to their cough or sneeze.)
- Do you have a cough, fever, shortness of breath, muscle aches, sore throat or unexplained loss of taste or smell?
- Has a public health officer said you were potentially exposed to COVID-19?



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#### STEP 4.

##### ► PRACTICE HAND HYGIENE AND RESPIRATORY ETIQUETTE

- If you do leave your home to go to a care facility, wear a mask so your coughs and sneezes are less likely to infect others.
- Wash your hands thoroughly (for at least 20 seconds) after sneezing, blowing your nose, coughing or using the bathroom, and before preparing or eating food.
- If you cough or sneeze, do so into the bend of your elbow, not your hand. Or use a tissue, and then throw it away immediately afterward.
- At home, clean often-touched surfaces such as doors and doorknobs, cabinet handles, bathroom hardware, tabletops, phones, tablets and keyboards regularly with disinfectant.

#### STEP 5.

##### ► STAY CALM

The possibility of having a contagious illness is scary, but doctors, nurses and other caregivers are learning more about COVID-19 every day. They are working together with national and international agencies to identify and provide care to patients while avoiding spread of the illness in the community.

**[Click here for a short video produced by Johns Hopkins on what to do if you feel sick.](#)**

