

About COVID-19

Coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as [Middle East Respiratory Syndrome \(MERS-CoV\)](#) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV). A novel coronavirus (nCoV) is a new strain that has not been previously identified in humans.

Common signs of infection include respiratory symptoms, fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death.

Standard recommendations to prevent infection spread include regular hand washing, covering mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing, thoroughly cooking meat and eggs. Avoid close contact with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness such as coughing and sneezing.

Protect yourself and others from COVID-19

If COVID-19 is spreading in your community, stay safe by taking some simple precautions, such as physical distancing, wearing a mask, keeping rooms well ventilated, avoiding crowds, cleaning your hands, and coughing into a bent elbow or tissue. Check local advice where you live and work. **Do it all!**

COVID-19 - Vaccines

The world is in the midst of a COVID-19 pandemic. As WHO and partners work together on the response -- tracking the pandemic, advising on critical interventions, distributing vital medical supplies to those in need-- they are racing to develop and deploy safe and effective vaccines.

Vaccines save millions of lives each year. Vaccines work by training and preparing the body's natural defences – the immune system – to recognize and fight off the viruses and bacteria they target. After vaccination, if the body is later exposed to those disease-causing germs, the body is immediately ready to destroy them, preventing illness.

As of 18 February 2021, at least seven different vaccines across three platforms have been rolled out in countries. Vulnerable populations in all countries are the highest priority for vaccination.

Vaccines are a critical new tool in the battle against COVID-19 and it is hugely encouraging to see so many vaccines proving successful and going into development. Working as quickly as they can, scientists from across the world are collaborating and innovating to bring us tests, treatments and vaccines that will collectively save lives and end this pandemic.

Safe and effective vaccines will be a gamechanger: but for the foreseeable future we must continue wearing masks, physically distancing and avoiding crowds. Being vaccinated does not mean that we can throw caution to the wind and put ourselves and others at risk, particularly because it is still not clear the degree to which the vaccines can protect not only against disease but also against infection and transmission.