Coronavirus Covid - 19

What Are Coronaviruses?

Contrary to popular belief, coronaviruses are actually quite common. The term 'coronavirus' itself refers to an extensive classification of viruses, which cause infections of the sinuses, nose and upper throat.
The name 'coronavirus' derives from the fact that the virus has a similar appearance to a crown, when observed under a microscope.
While the vast majority of coronaviruses pose little threat to human life, the newly identified COVID-19 can be deadly. Officially discovered in December 2019 in the midst of an outbreak in China, SARS-CoV-2 (severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2) was subsequently recognised as a new type of coronavirus by the World Health Organization.
SARS-CoV-2 is the virus that causes COVID-19.

What Is COVID-19?

Like all coronaviruses, COVID-19 is characterised as an infection of the respiratory tract. This means COVID-19 can cause mild to severe symptoms affecting the throat, nose and sinuses (the upper respiratory tract) or the windpipe and lungs (the lower respiratory tract).
One of the most shocking characteristics of the new COVID-19 virus is the way in which it spreads with exceptional ferocity from person-to-person. While some of those affected experience extremely mild symptoms (or no symptoms whatsoever), others require immediate and extensive medical care.
This is where COVID-19 differs significantly from the vast majority of coronaviruses like the common cold, which despite being widespread throughout the year pose no major threat to healthy individuals.

A Roundup of Essential Facts from the World Health Organization

The following information comes from the World Health Organization and was published to dispel a variety of harmful myths, untruths and assumptions about COVID-19:

1. Vitamin and mineral supplements cannot cure COVID-19
2. Studies show hydroxychloroquine does not have clinical benefits in treating COVID-19
3. People should NOT wear masks when exercising vigorously, as masks may reduce the ability to breathe comfortably.
4. The likelihood of shoes spreading COVID-19 is very low
5. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is caused by a virus, NOT by bacteria
6. The prolonged use of medical masks when properly worn, DOES NOT cause CO2 intoxication nor oxygen deficiency
7. Most people who get COVID-19 recover from it
8. Drinking alcohol does not protect you against COVID-19 and can be dangerous
9. Thermal scanners CANNOT detect COVID-19
10. There are currently no drugs licensed for the treatment or prevention of COVID-19
11. Adding pepper to your soup or other meals DOES NOT prevent or cure COVID-19

12. COVID-19 is NOT transmitted through houseflies
13. Spraying and introducing bleach or another disinfectant into your body WILL NOT protect you against COVID-19 and can be dangerous
14. 99Drinking methanol, ethanol or bleach DOES NOT prevent or cure COVID-19 and can be extremely dangerous
15. 5G mobile networks DO NOT spread COVID-19
16. Exposing yourself to the sun or temperatures higher than 25°C DOES NOT protect you from COVID-19
17. Catching COVID-19 DOES NOT mean you will have it for life
18. Being able to hold your breath for 10 seconds or more without coughing or feeling discomfort DOES NOT mean you are free from COVID-19
19. The COVID-19 virus can spread in hot and humid climates
20. Cold weather and snow CANNOT kill the COVID-19 virus
21. Taking a hot bath will not prevent you from catching COVID-19
22. The COVID-19 virus CANNOT be spread through mosquito bites
23. Hand dryers are NOT effective in killing the COVID-19 virus
24. Ultra-violet (UV) lamps should NOT be used to disinfect hands or other areas of your skin
25. Vaccines against pneumonia DO NOT protect against the COVID-19 virus
26. Rinsing your nose with saline does NOT prevent COVID-19
27. Eating garlic does NOT prevent COVID-19
28. People of all ages can be infected by the COVID-19 virus
29. Antibiotics CANNOT prevent or treat COVID-19
30. There is no known effective treatment for COVID-19

What Are the Symptoms of COVID-19?

Understanding the symptoms of COVID-19 is proving problematic, both for the global scientific community and for the public at large. This is because not only are some of the symptoms associated with COVID-19 similar to those of the common cold or flu, but many patients diagnosed with COVID-19 do not experience any initial symptoms whatsoever.
According to the World Health Organization, it is possible to carry COVID-19 for anything from 48 hours to 14 days, prior to any symptoms becoming noticeable.

New discoveries about the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 are being made all the times, which is why it is essential to keep up with the latest information from the WHO, CDC, NHS and so on. The most common indicative symptoms of COVID-19 are as follows:

- A high temperature
- A new continuous cough
- Loss of taste or smell
- Tiredness

- Shortness of breath

Some patients (though in significantly smaller numbers) have also reported the following symptoms, following their COVID-19 diagnosis:

Sore throat

- Runny nose
- Nasal congestion
- Loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Headache
- A rash on skin, or discolouration of fingers or toes
- Red or irritated eyes
- Aches and pains
- Diarrhoea
- Chronic fatigue

However, no specific combination of any of the above symptoms *confirms* a case of COVID-19. The only way to accurately diagnose COVID-19 is by way of a special test, which is currently only offered to those presenting with more severe symptoms and frontline medical workers.
According to public health guidelines issued by the NHS in the UK, anyone who experiences any of the following symptoms should immediately go into isolation and take a test:

- a high temperature
- a new, continuous cough
- a loss of, or change to, your sense of smell or taste

Additional information on getting a free PCR test if you experience any of these symptoms can be found at the following address:
https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test

Is it a Cold, the Flu or COVID-19?

Distinguishing between the flu, the common cold and COVID-19 can be difficult with milder cases of the virus. This is because the early symptoms of all three illnesses may be relatively similar, while patients often present with entirely different *combinations* of symptoms.
To simplify the identification of COVID-19, several major public health authorities and media outlets have produced visual guides to the symptoms of coronaviruses:

Symptoms	Coronavirus	Flu	Cold
 Fever	Common	Common	Rare
 Cough	Common	Common	Mild
 Loss of taste and smell	Sudden	Rare	Sometimes
 Fatigue	Sometimes	Common	Sometimes
 Headaches	Sometimes	Common	Rare
 Aches and pains	Sometimes	Common	Common
 Runny/stuffy nose	Rare	Sometimes	Common
 Sore throat	Sometimes	Sometimes	Common
 Sneezing	No	No	Common
 Shortness of breath	Sometimes	No	No
 Diarrhoea	Sometimes for children	Sometimes, especially for children	No

Source: WHO, CDC

BBC

Source: ***The BBC, WHO and CDC***

As there is a degree of crossover between the three illnesses, it is important to take sensible precautions if you suspect you may have COVID-19. Speak to your doctor or healthcare provider if necessary, though it is worth remembering that most mild cases of COVID-19 can be managed at home, without professional medical care.

Mild vs Severe Infection

The National Health Service (NHS) in the UK estimates that around 80% of those infected with COVID-19 experience mild symptoms, similar to those of a regular cold. In which case, no special treatment or medical care is required.
However, approximately one in every six of those infected with COVID-19 will become seriously ill and require extensive treatment. The highest risk brackets for serious illness or death due to COVID-19 are as follows:

- Individuals aged 60 or over
- People with compromised immune systems
- Patients with underlying medical problems
- Patients with diabetes

Underlying medical issues that elevate the risk of developing serious illness from COVID-19 include chronic respiratory conditions, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure and certain types of cancer.
Irrespective of your age and general state of health, authorities advise seeking immediate medical advice upon experiencing any of the following more severe symptoms:

- Trouble breathing
- Blue lips or face
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- Confusion
- Excessive drowsiness

Call the emergency services immediately if you experience any of these symptoms.

However, patients experiencing milder COVID-19 symptoms are advised *not* to call the emergency services or travel to their local surgery. Instead, public health bodies advise calling your doctor's office (or any special numbers/helplines) set up in your jurisdiction for further advice.
Travelling to a medical centre while experiencing the initial symptoms of COVID-19 risks spreading the virus to other people.

How is the Coronavirus Transmitted?

The primary method of transmission for the newly identified COVID-19 is close person-to-person contact.
According to the World Health Organization, the virus that causes COVID-19 is transmitted through the droplets produced when an individual carrying the infection speaks, sneezes or coughs.

Each of these actions causes tiny droplets to project into the surrounding space, often travelling up to 6 feet through the air.
Should any of these droplets be inhaled or swallowed, the respective individual may develop the virus. Coronaviruses can also be transmitted by way of these microscopic droplets entering the body through the eyes.
Contrary to popular belief, COVID-19 is not currently recognised as an airborne virus. Instead, the droplets emitted that spread the virus from person to person are too heavy to remain suspended in the air. Once produced, they quickly give way to gravity and settle on floors and surrounding surfaces. This is precisely why public health authorities are currently advising people to keep a distance of at least two metres between themselves and others. In doing so, this significantly reduces their likelihood of being exposed to the droplets carrying the virus.

Is Surface Transmission Possible with COVID-19?

Both the National Health Service in the United Kingdom and the World Health Organization have stated that the likelihood of catching COVID-19 from a contaminated surface is comparatively low. There is currently little to no evidence to support the theory that the surface transmission poses anywhere near as severe a threat as close person-to-person contact.
However, most health authorities also acknowledge the fact that COVID-19 can survive on a variety of surfaces for several hours. As a result, it is technically possible to catch coronavirus by touching a surface or object that is contaminated, before touching your nose, your mouth or your eyes.
According to the latest COVID-19 research, the virus can survive the following periods of time on common everyday surfaces:

- Copper: 4 hours
- Cardboard: up to 24 hours
- Plastic or stainless steel: 2 to 3 days

Public health groups are therefore advising a common-sense approach, which through simple everyday hygiene can eliminate the risk of surface transmission from the equation. Even if the risk of contracting COVID-19 from a contaminated surface is relatively low, it still represents a risk that is best avoided where possible.

What Does 'Community Spread' Mean?

The term 'community spread' is used by health officials and doctors when the actual source of an infection is unclear. In the case of COVID-19, community spread occurs when an individual contracts the virus despite not having had (or nor realise having had) close contact with an infected individual, and who hasn't been out of the country to an affected area.
For example, the CDC in the United States confirmed early in the pandemic that an individual diagnosed with COVID-19 previously had no known contact with an infected individual and had not travelled to an area where the disease was known to be present. This was documented as the first official case of community spread in North America. However, the extent of the pandemic worldwide makes it impossible to confirm whether any given person has been exposed to an infected individual or not. Particularly as COVID-19 is often asymptomatic - those carrying and transmitting it may not even realise they have it.

How to Protect Yourself from COVID-19

The most important good-practice guidelines from protecting yourself from COVID-19 are relatively straightforward. For the most part, it's simply a case of making a few basic lifestyle changes and getting yourself (and your family) into good habits.
Formal recommendations from leading global health authorities are as follows:

- **Get vaccinated when it's your turn**. Follow local guidance about vaccination. This is the single most effective wat of protecting yourself and others against the virus.

- **Keep your hands clean**
  - **Wash your hands properly** with soap and water for a minimum of 20 seconds on a regular basis, especially if you have been out in public or have recently coughed or sneezed.
  - **Use an approved hand sanitizer** with an alcohol content of at least 70% throughout the day, whenever soap and water are not available.
  - Unless you have recently washed your hands, it is advisable to **avoid touching your mouth, your nose and your eyes** under any circumstances.

- **Avoid close contact with others**
  - Under no circumstances should you **visit or meet anyone** who displays even the mildest suspected symptoms of COVID-19.
  - At all times, **practice social distancing** as instructed by your local health authority.
  - **Do not allow visitors** into your home who you cannot be sure are COVID-safe and avoid opening your door to couriers, delivery drivers and so on without wearing a mask.
  - **Avoid crowded places where possible** - particularly confined indoor environments where the risk of transmission is elevated.

- **Lead a healthy lifestyle**
  - **Protect and strengthen your immune system**, which is your number-one defence against the most dangerous symptoms and effects of COVID-19.
  - Make sure you **eat a balanced diet and exercise** on a regular basis, which may mean getting creative at home if you're self-isolating or on lockdown.
  - Avoid alcohol, tobacco and all other **negative lifestyle habits** that could take a toll on your immune system.

How to Protect Others from COVID-19

The key to overcoming the global COVID-19 crisis lies in behaving responsibly, and proactively protecting those around you. Several important guidelines have been issued by the World Health Organization and other leading authorities, which primarily concern the following:

- **Stay at home**
  - Follow all self-isolation and quarantine rules in your area as specified by local health authorities.

- Remember that if you are experiencing no symptoms whatsoever, you could still be carrying and spreading COVID-19 without realising it.
- Contact your doctor or healthcare service by telephone if you experience mild symptoms, rather than visiting a health centre or surgery in person.

- **Cover your nose and mouth**
  - Always use a tissue where possible to **cover your nose and mouth** when coughing or sneezing, or the inside of your elbow if you do not have one.
  - Immediately **throw every used tissue in the trash** after one use, as opposed to using the same tissue or handkerchief several times over.
  - Give your hands a thorough **wash for at least 20 seconds** after coughing or sneezing, or use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available at the time.

Do I Need to Wear a Facemask?

Both the World Health Organization and the CDC have stated that wearing a mask should be mandatory in a variety of settings. However, rules and requirements vary significantly from one location and jurisdiction to the next.

Outdoors in uncrowded public places, masks are not considered necessary due to the relatively low risk of transmission. However, in any instance where a person is likely to come into close contact with others or spend time in a busy indoor environment (such as public transport), masks are either recommended or a formal legal requirement (depending on location).

What's important to remember when wearing a facemask is that in the instance of most everyday face coverings, little to no direct protection is provided against COVID-19 infection. Instead, masks are worn to reduce the likelihood of infected individuals spreading the virus to others. Conventional face coverings do not effectively filter viruses from the air the wearer breathes in, but they can massively reduce the prevalence of the virus in the air an infected individual breathes out.
Hence, wearing a standard face covering **isn't about protecting yourself, but instead protecting others**. In an environment where *everyone* present wears a mask, the likelihood of an infected individual spreading the virus to others in the vicinity is exponentially reduced.

A Note on N-95 Masks

N-95 respirator masks are those that are certified as able to eliminate a minimum of 95% of hazardous particles of a certain size from the air the wearer breathes in. Such masks can provide more effective protection from COVID-19 transmission where available, though are not considered 100% effective.
In addition, where an N-95 mask has an unfiltered exhaust valve, there's no protection whatsoever for those in the vicinity. The wearer is protected to an extent, but if they are carrying the virus, they could spread it easily to anyone around them as they exhale.
This is why N-95 masks *without* unfiltered exhaust valves are recommended as the more responsible choice by most public health advisers. In addition, the filtration efficiency of N95 masks is influenced by how well the mask fits the face of the wearer. Unless the mask fits tightly around the edges, it may provide comparatively low protection.

Cleaning and Disinfecting Against Coronavirus

While there is currently no direct evidence to suggest that COVID-19 can be caught from a contaminated surface, common sense precautions are advised to eliminate the possibility of surface transmission entirely.
The latest advice from the World Health Organization highlights the following as important for all households and businesses alike:

- Ensure all **frequently touched surfaces** are cleaned on a regular basis, which includes doorknobs and handles, phones, desks, toilets, computer keyboards, tables, work surfaces, light switches, sinks and so on.
- Disinfect and **sanitise dirty surfaces *after* cleaning** them in the normal way, using an environmentally friendly disinfectant or sanitizer that is approved for use on the surface/material in question.

It's also possible to make an effective cleaning solution by diluting approximately four teaspoons of household bleach in 1 litre of water. Under no circumstances should household bleach be mixed with any other cleaning products, as doing so can increase the risk of harmful emissions being produced. Alcohol solutions can be particularly effective in cleaning and disinfecting against COVID-19, though must have a minimum alcohol content of 70% to eliminate the virus.

What Should I Do if I Get Sick?

If you suspect you may have contracted COVID-19, it's important to remember that the vast majority of cases are mild and require no medical intervention. In which case, you will be able to manage your symptoms and take care of yourself at home, until you are well enough to end self-isolation.
However, if you experience any emergency warning signs whatsoever - examples of which include breathing difficulties, disorientation or chest pains - you must ensure you get medical help immediately.
This is a summary of the information the World Health Organization currently offers for those who think they may have COVID-19, after experiencing one or more initial symptoms:

Do not leave your home unless for emergency medical help:

- **Stay at home** and keep a careful watch over your symptoms, as the vast majority of cases of COVID-19 are mild enough to be managed at home, without medical intervention.
- **Consult with your doctor** by phone or online to discuss your symptoms and decide what (if any) action needs to be taken. Do not visit your doctor without calling in advance.
- **Do not use public transportation** in any form if it is necessary to make a journey, as to do so is to put others at risk.

Isolate yourself from other members of your household:

- **Lower the risk of infecting others** within your household by isolating yourself for the duration. If possible, allocate yourself a separate bedroom and bathroom.

- **Avoid sharing everyday items** with members of your family, including plates, cutlery, drinking vessels and electronic devices like mobile phones.
- **Cut off all direct in-person contact** with friends and family members for a minimum of seven days, or longer if your symptoms have still not sufficiently subsided.

Note: *It is important to ensure that all other members of the household understand their responsibilities and obligations where self-isolation is concerned. According to the World Health Organization, anyone who lives with an individual who displays COVID-19 symptoms must Self-isolate for a minimum of 14 days, as it often takes more than a week for the symptoms of the virus to appear in the first place.*

Call your doctor before visiting:

- **It may not be necessary to visit your doctor** in person, which is why it is essential that you call in advance to arrange a telephone/online consultation where possible.
- **Tell your doctor you may have COVID-19** before attending any urgent appointments you cannot postpone, as they may need to make preparations before your arrival.
- **Be aware of any special instructions** upon arriving at your doctor's office, which may include specific entrances and exits for suspected COVID-19 patients.

Wear an approved facemask at home if necessary:

- **If you have COVID-19 symptoms**, you should wear a facemask at all times when others are in the vicinity to protect them from potential transmission.
- **If someone in your home is sick**, wearing a mask with high filtration efficiency is considered essential - particularly if you are caring for them directly or in close contact.

Note*: If an approved medical facemask is unavailable, some practitioners recommend improvising with a clean scarf or similar garment. They may not provide the same level of protection as a medical facemask, but are considered better than no protection at all.*

Cover your coughs and sneezes:

- **Take extra care** when coughing or sneezing, ensuring your nose and mouth are fully covered with a tissue.
- **Immediately discard used tissues** after coughing or sneezing into them - don't simply leave them on the floor or on surfaces around the room.
- **Always wash your hands** immediately after coughing or sneezing for at least 20 seconds using soap and water. If unavailable, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer instead.

Monitor your symptoms:

- **Keep a close eye on your symptoms** and record temperature readings on a regular basis, which you may need to discuss with your doctor.

- **Use conventional over-the-counter remedies** and preparations to manage the symptoms of mild COVID-19 infection, as advised by your local or national health authority.
- **Keep up to date** with the latest advice, information and recommendations online, published by your healthcare provider or local health department.

***Note**: Any change in the symptoms you experience should be taken seriously, irrespective of how minor they are. If in doubt, consult with your doctor by telephone, or organise an online consultation to discuss your symptoms.*

When Should I Seek Emergency Medical Help?

One of the biggest issues experienced by COVID-19 patients is knowing where to draw the line between a mild case and a case that requires emergency medical help. In addition, the fact that many COVID-19 patients present with different combinations of symptoms can make it difficult to know when to make the call.
In accordance with the latest advice from the CDC and the WHO, urgent medical attention should be sought immediately if any of the following occur:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion or inability to arouse
- Bluish lips or face

Under no circumstances should this list be interpreted as conclusive - any new or worsening symptoms that cause concern should be brought the attention of your medical provider at the earliest possible stage.

Caring for Someone with Coronavirus at Home

The most important thing to remember when caring for someone at home with coronavirus is that even if you yourself are experiencing no symptoms of COVID-19, you may still be carrying the disease. As a result, the World Health Organization states that anyone living with a person with a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 *must* self-isolate for a minimum of 14 days.
This means that under no circumstances should you leave your home or have any direct in-person contact with anyone else during this time.
Additional guidelines for caring for a COVID-19 patient at home from international public health authorities are as follows:

Monitor their symptoms carefully:

- **Keep a record of their temperature** readings and their general state of health, in order to note any important changes along the way.
- **Contact their healthcare provider** immediately if their condition deteriorates, or if they experience any severe COVID-19 symptoms.

- **Use online resources** set up by your local health authority for advice, or arrange periodic online/telephone consultations to discuss their condition.

Prevent the spread of the virus:

- **Isolate the sick individual** in one room of the home, leaving meals and supplies etc. outside their door to avoid as much direct contact as possible.
- **Do not share any personal items** such as bedding, towels, dishes, electronics, cups and cutlery.
- **Always wear a mask** when around the sick individual and ensure that the patient also wears a facemask, if it is possible for them to do so.

Protect yourself from infection:

- **Prioritise your health and wellbeing** sufficiently, as you will not and be able to care for the sick individual if you also succumb to the virus.
- **Wash your hands even more thoroughly** and more frequently than usual, using hand sanitizer on a regular basis to kill the virus.
- **Step up your home hygiene regime**, paying close attention to all objects and services that are touched most often, such as light switches, worktops and doorknobs.

Help the patient manage their symptoms:

- **Encourage adequate hydration** and ensure that the affected individual drinks plenty of fluids, avoiding dehydration at all costs.
- **Use over-the-counter remedies** to combat the symptoms of mild cases of COVID-19, in accordance with you doctor's advice or that of a pharmacist.
- **Ensure the patient gets plenty of rest** and do your best to keep their spirits up, using video calling software and connected technology to maintain communication.

***Note**: Individuals considered to be within the high-risk bracket are advised to seek urgent medical attention the moment they begin displaying any signs or symptoms of COVID-19. If the individual affected is aged 70 or over or has any severe underlying health complaints, you should not attempt to care for them at home unless advised to do so by a qualified professional.*

When to End Self-Isolation at Home

Evidence to date suggests that the vast majority of COVID-19 patients who display mild symptoms will recover from the condition after around seven days. Most minor symptoms disappear relatively quickly, though may linger for a couple of weeks and subside more gradually.
Knowing when to end self-isolation at home is important, as it is still possible to transmit the virus when you yourself are experiencing no noticeable symptoms whatsoever. The World Health Organization issues the following guidelines for patients with suspected cases of COVID-19:

- If you are tested to find out whether or not you are still contagious, the authority carrying out the tests will inform you if and when it is safe for you to end self-isolation.

- If you are *not* going to be tested to determine whether or not you are still contagious, official guidelines state that isolation can be ended when:
    - Your temperature has been within the normal range for a minimum of three full days, without using medicine to bring your fever under control, AND
    - Your symptoms in general have eased significantly or subsided entirely, with no signs of worsening, AND
    - You have been self-isolating for a minimum of seven days since first experiencing the symptoms of COVID-19.

Official COVID-19 testing protocols vary from one jurisdiction to the next, though CDC guidelines currently state that two negative tests in a row should be taken within the same 24-hour period to confirm recovery from the virus.
In all instances, the guidelines published by your local health department or healthcare provider should be followed to the letter. If in doubt, consult directly with your doctor or healthcare provider (by telephone or online) before ending self-isolation.
Again, it is important to remember that even though you may be feeling better, there's still a chance you could be carrying and transmitting COVID-19 to other people.

The COVID-19 Vaccine

The World Health Organization - along with the most prevalent national and international health bodies - have approved several vaccines as safe and effective against COVID-19. While no vaccine is capable of offering 100% protection from the virus, vaccination has been proven to significantly reduce the risk of severe illness, hospitalization and death.

As of 15 November 2021, WHO has evaluated that the following vaccines against COVID-19 have met the necessary criteria for safety and efficacy:

- AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine
- Johnson and Johnson
- Moderna
- Pfizer/BionTech
- Sinopharm
- Sinovac
- COVAXIN

The official advice from the WHO on vaccines reads as follows:

"Take whatever vaccine is made available to you first, even if you have already had COVID-19. It is important to be vaccinated as soon as possible once it's your turn and not wait. Approved COVID-19 vaccines provide a high degree of protection against getting seriously ill and dying from the disease, although no vaccine is 100% protective."

Who Should Get Vaccinated?

Each of the approved COVID-19 vaccines is considered safe for the vast majority of adults aged 18 years or older, including individuals with pre-existing health conditions and auto-immune disorders. Patients with hypertension, diabetes, asthma, pulmonary, liver and kidney disease are generally considered eligible for a vaccination, though it is important to discuss suitability with your doctor if unsure.

In particular, the WHO the recommends discussing vaccination options with a suitable professional if you:

- Have a compromised immune system
- Are pregnant (if you are already breastfeeding, you should continue after vaccination)
- Have a history of severe allergies, particularly to a vaccine (or any of the ingredients in the vaccine)
- Are severely frail

Increasingly, trials are being conducted on younger vaccine recipients - some countries have authorised the use of some vaccines for children as young as five. However, official guidelines from the WHO suggest limiting the use of certain vaccines for children, while studies continue:

"WHO's Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) has concluded that the Pfizer/BionTech vaccine is suitable for use by people aged 12 years and above. Children aged between 12 and 15 who are at high risk may be offered this vaccine alongside other priority groups for vaccination. Vaccine trials for children are ongoing and WHO will update its recommendations when the evidence or epidemiological situation warrants a change in policy."

Irrespective of whether or not a child is vaccinated against COVID-19, they should still have their normal course of childhood vaccinations.

What To Expect After Getting Vaccinated?

It is generally recommended to remain in the vaccination centre for 15 minutes after your vaccination, in order to ensure you do not have any allergic or unusual reactions.

If your vaccination requires a second or third dose, your subsequent appointment may be booked prior to leaving the clinic. Alternatively, it may be a case of booking your second appointment at a later date, as instructed by your practitioner.

Side effects associated with most COVID-19 vaccines are generally mild and no cause for concern. The most common side effects associated with COVID-19 which simply indicate that the vaccine is working include:

- Arm soreness
- Mild fever
- Tiredness
- Headaches
- Muscle or joint aches

However, patients who experience anything other than mild side-effects or adverse effects that do not go away after a few days are advised to contact their practitioners for advice.

In addition, anyone who suffers is a severe allergic reaction to their first dose of any COVID-19 vaccine should not go ahead with a second dose, without first consulting with their doctor. Severe side effects to all approved COVID-19 vaccines are extremely rare and the risk of adverse reactions is considered very low.

The WHO advises against taking paracetamol or other painkillers prior to receiving a COVID-19 vaccine, are simply as it is not yet known whether or not such painkillers may impact the effectiveness of the vaccine. However, paracetamol and other painkillers can be taken to treat the side-effects associated with the vaccine, such as pain, fever, headache or muscle aches.

A word from the WHO on how to stay safe after being vaccinated:

"Even after you're vaccinated, keep taking precautions"

"While a COVID-19 vaccine will prevent serious illness and death, we still don't know the extent to which it keeps you from being infected and passing the virus on to others. The more we allow the virus to spread, the more opportunity the virus has to change."

"Continue to take actions to slow and eventually stop the spread of the virus. Keep at least 1 metre from others. Wear a mask, especially in crowded, closed and poorly ventilated settings. Clean your hands frequently. Cover any cough or sneeze in your bent elbow. When indoors with others, ensure good ventilation, such as by opening a window."

The WHO has also created an in-depth FAQ covering most important questions and answers on COVID-19 vaccines and their benefits.

Is There a Treatment for COVID-19?

Experts are yet to identify a universally effective or reliable treatment for the more severe cases of COVID-19. However, new drugs are currently being trialled that may prove effective in preventing patients from becoming seriously ill after contracting COVID-19, effectively halting the progress of the virus in its tracks.

As the vast majority of COVID-19 cases are comparatively mild, the associated symptoms can be treated in the same way as those of the common cold or the flu. According to the National Health Service in the United Kingdom, the symptoms of mild cases of COVID-19 can be managed as follows:

- Get plenty of sleep and rest
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Use paracetamol to lower your temperature
- Seek help if your symptoms worsen

A variety of clinical trials are currently underway worldwide, examining the effectiveness or otherwise of new and existing drugs against coronavirus. Antiviral medications in particular may prove to be effective in the treatment of advanced cases of COVID-19.

In October 2020, the FDA approved the antiviral drug remdesivir to treat COVID-19, which was cleared for use in patients aged 12 and over.

More recently, Pfizer Inc said that during an extensive clinical trial, its antiviral COVID-19 pill showed near 90% efficacy in preventing hospitalizations and deaths in high-risk patients. Importantly, the drug - which will be sold under the name Paxlovid if authorised - is said to be equally effective against the newest and most virulent strains of COVID-19, including Omicron.

Where the drug was administered regularly shortly after the onset of symptoms, the effectiveness in-the drug in preventing hospitalizations or death was said to be around 89%.

Until such drugs are authorised for widespread use, the WHO continues to advise those who believe they may have been exposed to COVID-19 to do the following:

- Call your health care provider or COVID-19 hotline to find out where and when to get a test.
- Cooperate with contact-tracing procedures to stop the spread of the virus.
- If testing is not available, stay home and away from others for 14 days.
- While you are in quarantine, do not go to work, to school or to public places. Ask someone to bring you supplies.
- Keep at least a 1-metre distance from others, even from your family members.
- Wear a medical mask to protect others, including if/when you need to seek medical care.
- Clean your hands frequently.
- Stay in a separate room from other family members, and if not possible, wear a medical mask.
- Keep the room well-ventilated.
- If you share a room, place beds at least 1 metre apart.
- Monitor yourself for any symptoms for 14 days.

- Call your health care provider immediately if you have any of these danger signs: difficulty breathing, loss of speech or mobility, confusion or chest pain.
- Stay positive by keeping in touch with loved ones by phone or online, and by exercising at home.

Unfortunately, antibiotics have no effect whatsoever on COVID-19, as they are designed to treat bacterial infections, rather than viruses.

Is it Safe to Take Ibuprofen for COVID-19?

It was recently stated early in the pandemic by several major health authorities that ibuprofen should *not* be used to treat the symptoms of COVID-19. This was due to rudimentary evidence suggesting that ibuprofen could worsen the symptoms of COVID-19 and make the condition more difficult to treat.

However, the World Health Organization subsequently issued a statement in stating that there was no evidence to suggest ibuprofen is unsafe to take. Patients are therefore advised to consult with their own doctors or healthcare providers to assess their suitability or otherwise for ibuprofen, if experiencing the signs and symptoms of COVID-19.

Who is Eligible for a COVID-19 Test?

COVID-19 tests are now freely available on the NHS in the UK.

PCR tests are considered the more accurate of the two types of tests available, and are typically reserved for people with symptoms. The tests are sent to a laboratory for testing and the results are usually returned within a day or two.

Rapid lateral flow tests are recommended only for those who do not have symptoms, and can be performed at home for an instant result - similar to a pregnancy test.

Both tests are free of charge - check the NHS testing page for the latest information on how to get and take a COVID-19 test.

How Does the Test Work?

Whether self-administered at home or performed by a professional in a medical certain, the test takes place in the same way.

A swab is taken inside of the inside of the nose and the back of the throat using a long cotton bud, which is then used to identify the presence or otherwise of the virus.

What Happens Next?

There's much debate right now as to what the future holds for COVID-19. The problem being that with the pandemic still at a comparatively early stage, nobody really knows what happens next.

Like the common cold and the flu, the likelihood of COVID-19 being eradicated entirely is minimal at best. Instead, the key to combating coronavirus most likely lies in the development of increasingly effective vaccines and viable treatments for the more severe cases.

In the meantime, major health authorities like the CDC and the World Health Organization are advising the public at large to take whatever steps they can to avoid contracting and spreading COVID-19. There is also nothing more effective than getting vaccinated, if you are considered eligible by your doctor.

We're warned to expect things to get much worse before they get better, though a time will come when COVID-19 can be brought under control and normal life resumes. At which point, COVID-19 may pose a similar threat to the common cold or flu, becoming a generally mild and treatable illness for most who contract it.

Important Disclaimer:

- Due to the fact that coronavirus COVID-19 is a new virus discovered as recently as December 2019,new discoveries regarding its symptoms, effects, potential treatments and preventative measures are being made all the time.
- At present, much of the information provided by major bodies like the World Health Organising and the CDC is speculative at best. All information presented in this free COVID-19 course is correct as of December 2021, but may not reflect the latest developments and updated information on a real-time basis.
- Though we are committed to continually updating this course with new and important information, we cannot guarantee its absolute accuracy on a 24/7 basis.
- All information in this course is based on official guidelines and reports from the WHO, the CDC, the NHS and other leading bodies.
- Please contact Oxford Home Study Centre if you have any questions, or to discuss our free coronavirus course in more detail