

## For Families



# What can you do about the coronavirus?



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INSIGHTS FOR FAMILIES is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Insights is produced by Marcia Latta, communications consultant.

The coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, is a scary health event with a growing infection rate. So much is unknown about this global health crisis that started in China and has shown up in countries around the world. At the end of February, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported more than 85,000 diagnoses globally. Of the total number of cases, more than 2,000 people — roughly 2% have died.

The situation continues to change as new cases are reported. For the latest news, read the regularly updated situation reports by the WHO at [www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/](http://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/).

### Should you worry?

This new virus outbreak is big news, and it can be scary. There is a lot we still don't know about it. And there is currently no vaccine to prevent it.

The impact from this virus has been widespread. To reduce the infection rate, manufacturing plants in China have closed down, which has affected the production of goods. This has impacted the stock market. And now news reports are announcing new cases in states that hadn't yet been affected.

How worried should we be about personal safety — our own and our families?

Concerns about coronavirus are rational, but they can be put into perspective with some comparisons to the flu. UC Berkeley epidemiologist Dr. Arthur Reingold said that the flu has infected 26 million Americans this year and killed 25,000. "Worldwide, I think the estimates are that half a million people may be killed by influenza."

"We in public health, who know something about influenza, do try to get people worried about flu, to get their flu shot, et cetera. If we were paying the same amount of attention — updating the story every two hours, updating the number of deaths and the spread every few hours — to another disease, like influenza, people might be alarmed by that, right? I think a lot of it has to do with the fact that this is new. There's a lot that's not known." <http://bit.ly/38enHf8>

### Why you should worry

Perhaps worrying isn't the right approach, but being actively cautious is. As Dr. Reingold pointed out, concern or worry are effective ways to motivate people to take action. And there are plenty of recommendations from health professionals to minimize your risk of getting infected or seriously ill.

(Over)

## **Do I have coronavirus?**

The coronavirus is infectious. The symptoms are similar to the flu: fever, cough, runny nose, muscle aches and pains, and diarrhea. So how do you know when to see a doctor? People who have been exposed to or diagnosed with the virus are isolated to prevent a spread to others.

If you have flu-like symptoms and have traveled out of the country, specifically to China or other high-risk countries recently, you should call your doctor. Due to the fear of this virus, and the need to respond quickly to treat potential new cases, medical providers are experiencing high patient volumes. They can advise you whether to come in for testing.

## **Keeping kids safe**

The guidance for coronavirus is similar to other prevention tips:

- Wash your hands! This applies to anyone who has been in public or around someone who is sick. Use soap and water and wash for about 20 seconds (as long as it takes to sing the alphabet song).
- Keep your immune system strong by eating healthy, exercising and getting enough sleep.
- Get vaccinated. This is for the flu, not specifically the coronavirus, but it will minimize the risk of sickness.
- Teach kids not to touch their faces — mouths, eyes, noses. This can be tough. Model it for them by keeping your hands away from your face.
- Teach kids not to touch public surfaces if they don't have to. Germs live in all areas where people are. Avoid contact.
- Stay away from sick people if you can. Stay home when you are sick and avoid others who may be contagious.
- Carry hand sanitizer and spread all over kids' hands, including between their fingers.

<http://bit.ly/2VD9F42>

## **Read more: resources for parents**

As health experts continue to learn more, additional resources will be available. Here are some resources to help you minimize worry and keep your children healthy.

### **Cleveland Clinic Health Essentials, The New Coronavirus: What Is It, and Should You Worry?**

<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/the-new-coronavirus-what-is-it-and-should-you-worry/>

### **Parents.com All About Coronavirus COVID-19: A Concerned Parent's Guide** [www.parents.com/health/all-about-coronavirus-a-concerned-parents-guide](http://www.parents.com/health/all-about-coronavirus-a-concerned-parents-guide)

### **What Parents Need to Know About Coronavirus**

<https://parenting.nytimes.com/childrens-health/coronavirus-children-pregnant-women>