What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is the name given to the coronavirus that originated from Wuhan, China in late 2019. As of right now the virus has spread to over 100 countries around the World, has infected more than 300,000 people and has claimed approximately 13,000 lives.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared COVID-19 a pandemic. This has resulted in worldwide hysteria. The NBA has postponed the season, the United States has banned all travellers from Europe and sporting events of all kinds have been cancelled.

There is a worldwide shortage of hand sanitizer, facemasks and toilet paper. Yes you heard right, people are stocking up on toilet paper of all things. Travel plans are being cancelled, weddings, birthday parties and other family events are being cancelled or postponed as well. Even the stock market has taken a hit. Is this hysteria warranted? How can I protect myself?

This is why I created this short PDF. Hopefully I can answer some questions you may have about COVID-19 and help you protect you and your loved ones.

What Kind of Virus Is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is classified as a coronavirus. Coronaviruses are viruses that are similar to the Influenza virus (the flu) but are from a different family. Even though there are similarities, the coronavirus can be responsible for the common cold or a severe infection that affects a patient’s respiratory tract. SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) and MERS (Middle Eastern respiratory syndrome) were both coronaviruses.

Symptoms

There are some overlapping symptoms between COVID-19, the common cold and the flu. Below is a list of symptoms that can be experienced by a person who is infected with COVID-19.
Please note the symptoms in **bold**. As they are the ones that are most concerning for the coronavirus and are used to **clinically distinguish** who is **more likely** to be infected with COVID-19 as opposed to the influenza virus.

- Fever
- Cough (especially a **dry cough**)
- Fatigue
- Muscles aches and pains
- **Shortness of breath**
- **Respiratory issues**
- **Gradual onset of symptoms**

The last point is important. The flu usually comes on very abruptly whereas the coronavirus will result in symptoms appearing gradually.

If you have these symptoms, **PLEASE GET TESTED and SELF-QUARANTINE while waiting for the results.**

**Note:** If you’re **sneezing, have a runny nose, congested or have itchy, watering eyes** it’s more indicative of allergies or the common cold.

**How Is COVID-19 Transmitted?**

COVID-19 is transmitted through **respiratory droplets**. When a person who is infected, sneezes or coughs, the virus is released into the environment. If you breathe in the virus or touch something that the live virus was on and then touch your mouth/ nose then it’s possible to become infected.

There is evidence to suggest that COVID-19 can live for **hours** on various different surfaces. It’s important to know that viruses **cannot survive indefinitely** outside of a host; eventually the virus will lose the ability to infect others and “die”.

**Note:** Viruses are not classified as living things. When doctors speak of viruses “dying”, they are simply referring to the fact that the virus has lost its ability to infect another host and replicate.
Who Is At Risk?

Anyone can be infected with COVID-19. No one is immune from infection. However, the severity of the infection can vary considerably between people. Person A may be infected and have a mild cough for a few days whereas Person B infected with the same virus can potentially find themselves in the ICU.

People over the age of 65 and those with underlying conditions that affect their respiratory tracts or are immunocompromised are most at risk. This is because any insult to their lungs or immune systems can worsen their existing conditions and make it harder for the body to fight the infection. This includes people with:

- COPD
- Asthma
- Congestive heart failure
- Emphysema
- Fibrosis of the lung
- People undergoing chemotherapy
- Those with lung cancer
- Anyone with an active infection such as pneumonia

How To Protect Yourself And Your Family

No one can beat this on their own, we all need to come together and do our part in stopping the spread throughout our communities. Please take this advice seriously and do whatever you can to minimize your chances of contracting COVID-19.

The healthcare system is already becoming overwhelmed with the sheer volume of patients coming in. Just remember, by taking these precautions and implementing these simple steps, you’re not only protecting yourself but your loved ones and your community as well.

Social Distancing

As humans, we’re programmed to be social beings who employ touch and appropriate social distance in order to build rapport and connection. However, in
times like these practising social distancing is one of the most effective methods to prevent spread of the virus.

For the time being, it’s perfectly acceptable to not shake hands when meeting someone and it’s not only acceptable but beneficial to stand further away from each other than usual when interacting. The World Health Organization (WHO) has recommended a distance of approximately 6 feet when talking to one another.

Self Isolation

Along with social distancing this is one of the most effective strategies you can employ to protect yourself, your family and other members of your community. If you can work from home then please work from home, refrain from going to public events, shop online, pay your bills online and stop going to social gatherings.

The point is, you want to stay at home as much as you can. If you’re feeling unwell (ANY signs of sickness) then PLEASE self isolate for a period of 14 days even if those symptoms are indicative of a common cold. There is no way of knowing for sure if you’re infected with COVID-19 unless you get tested.

If you’re experiencing any of the symptoms listed previously in bold, especially if you’re over the age of 65+ then PLEASE GET TESTED. Call your doctor if you’re unsure.

Wash Your Hands/ Sanitize

If you have to leave your home, then please sanitize your hands at regular intervals and when entering your home. Washing your hands is superior to using hand sanitizers but are less accessible when you’re outside your home.

Ideally you want to make sure you wash your hands when entering your home. If you have visitors, then please don’t hesitate to politely remind them to wash their hands well! We all have to fight this as a community.

Another major point that most people neglect is their cell phone! Your cell phone is exposed to as many germs/bacteria and viruses as your hands are. In addition, the proximity of the cell phone to your mouth makes it relatively easy for you to become infected.
The problem is that you risk damaging your phone if you were to sanitize it and you can’t exactly clean it with soap and water. However, you can use the power of UV light to kill any lingering viruses/bacteria that may be harboring on the phone or in the phonecase. You can purchase an ultraviolet smartphone sanitizer HERE.

Boost Your Immunity

The previous 3 steps will protect your loved ones and community along with yourself. This step is more for your own protection. When anything foreign invades our bodies, our body’s defence system (immune system) kicks in in order to protect you.

So why do some people who get infected with COVID-19 have a minor cough for a few days whereas someone else can potentially land themselves in the hospital? A large part of it comes down to the strength of a person’s immune system.

Please note that strengthening your immune system will not prevent the coronavirus from entering your body. But it can definitely impact how well your body protects you and how severe the infection will be. Please start to boost your immune system by eating healthy and getting enough sleep.

Taking in enough zinc will ramp up your immune system and help it defend you better. You can pick up some ZMA, HERE. ZMA stands for Zinc Magnesium Aspartate and is also used to recover from workouts and illness faster. The increased sleep quality it provides will help lower your cortisol (stress hormone) and maximize the quality of your body’s immune system.

For those with chronic disease, people 65+, if you have autoimmune or underlying lung disease, I recommend taking an immune system support supplement. I’ve found this one to contain ingredients that will be most beneficial, including vitamin C, zinc and echinacea.

Note: Please talk to your doctor before taking any supplement to ensure it doesn’t interact with any medication you’re currently taking.

Please Remember……
The most important thing to do in situations like this is to **stay calm and don’t panic**! Humanity has seen its fair share of disease and illness and has overcome it to flourish; this pandemic is no different.

We have to make sure that the most vulnerable people of society and those at the highest risk are protected and that every person plays their part to keep themselves and everyone else safe.

No one can fight this by themselves but **everyone can fight it together**.

- Dr. Sunny Sharma, MD