

FAQ for Employees: COVID-19 (coronavirus) Guidance

March 2020

What is COVID-19 (coronavirus)?

Coronaviruses are a family of viruses common throughout the world that can cause illness in both animals and people. COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus. This new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019.

How does COVID-19 (coronavirus) spread?

People can catch COVID-19 from others who have the virus. The disease can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth which are spread when a person with COVID-19 coughs or exhales. These droplets land on objects and surfaces around the person. Other people then catch COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. People can also catch COVID-19 if they breathe in droplets from a person with COVID-19 who coughs out or exhales droplets. This is why it is important to stay more than 1 meter (3 feet) away from a person who is sick.

What are the symptoms of the COVID-19?

Symptoms are similar to an upper respiratory infection and may include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

However, many people with COVID-19 experience only mild symptoms. This is particularly true at the early stages of the disease. While we are still learning about how COVID-2019 affects people, older persons and persons with pre-existing medical conditions (such as high blood pressure, heart disease, lung disease, cancer or diabetes) appear to develop serious illness more often than others.

What if I think I was exposed to COVID-19

If you believe you may have been exposed to COVID-19, it is recommended you avoid public places, including public transportation. Call your primary care provider (or local public health agency) immediately to ask for guidance.

Is there a treatment for COVID-19?

There is no vaccine and no specific antiviral medicine to prevent or treat COVID-2019. However, those affected should receive care to relieve symptoms. People with serious illness should be hospitalized. Most patients recover thanks to supportive care.

How can I protect myself from COVID-19?

Until there are more answers, you are advised to follow good prevention practices, including:

- Washing your hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds or using alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, like your phone or computer
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze then throw the tissue in the trash bin
- Stay home when you are sick

Should I wear a face mask?

CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a face mask to protect themselves from respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19. You should only wear a mask if a healthcare professional recommends it.

Is there guidance related to international travel?

At present, it is recommended that travelers avoid all nonessential travel. Additional restrictions and cancellations of events may occur. This situation is evolving, so please look to your local government authorities or watch for updates on World Health Organization or CDC for guidance.

Where can I find more information about COVID-2019?

For updated information, guidance and travel alerts about the coronavirus, visit the **World Health Organization (WHO) or CDC**. Optum is actively monitoring this situation to ensure we respond appropriately to the needs of our employees, customers and members.

Resources:

[Coronavirus Travel Advice- WHO.int](https://www.who.int/travel-advice)

[Coronavirus Situation Dashboard- WHO.int](https://www.who.int/situation)

[Coronavirus FAQs- CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

[COVID-19 Updates- CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

Optum Public Crisis Line: Our toll-free emotional support help line at (866) 342-6892 is free of charge and available to anyone, so you can share it with family and friends. Caring professionals will connect people to resources. It will be open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You can also login to **Liveandworkwell.com**, using your company access code for more information about COVID-19.