

Coronavirus: Frequently Asked Questions from Patients and Family

How do you get coronavirus?

Coronavirus is spread primarily by exposure to respiratory droplets that are generated when an infected individual coughs or sneezes. If these droplets come in contact with the eyes, nose, or mouth of another person, infection can develop.

Infected droplets can remain active on surfaces for some time. This can happen, for example, if an infected person sneezes and the droplets land on a keyboard or countertop. Or an infected person may touch a doorknob or light switch. You can catch the virus if you touch one of these areas and then touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.

What are the symptoms of the coronavirus?

- Fever
- Cough (usually a dry cough)
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing

Symptoms may also include

- Tiredness/fatigue
- Body aches
- Runny nose
- Sore throat

Research shows that symptoms usually appear within about 5 days, but it can take longer. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) say that symptoms of COVID-19 may start between 2–14 days after exposure (being infected by the virus).

Are children with underlying illnesses such as cancer or a blood disorder more at risk?

There isn't a lot of evidence at this time, but we urge you to take all needed precautions. We know that children and teens undergoing treatment for cancer or a blood disorder often have a weaker immune system, which can make it harder for them to fight viruses and infection. As a parent or caregiver, you should be sure your family takes all possible precautions to prevent infection.

How can I help protect my child and family?

- **Maintain social distance.** This means you and your child should avoid contact with other people. Keep a distance of at least six feet between yourself and others.
- **Wash your hands often with soap and water** or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- **Cover your nose and mouth** when you cough or sneeze.
- **If your hands are not clean**, don't touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- **Clean and disinfect areas that people often touch**, like toys and doorknobs.
- **Avoid crowds and stay home as much as possible.** Do not let your child attend social gatherings. Avoid using mass transit.

Since it is a respiratory virus, why the emphasis on hand washing vs. other protective measures?

If the virus is on your hands after you come in contact with an infected individual or a contaminated surface, you can become infected when you touch your face (eyes, nose, or mouth). Cleaning your hands with soap and water removes the virus so that you don't transfer it to your eyes, nose, or mouth.

Will my child's treatment continue during the COVID-19 health crisis?

Yes. If you are in treatment, we want you to keep your scheduled appointment. We have no plans to postpone appointments for patients in active treatment. Where medically appropriate, we may ask you to conduct certain appointments online, by phone, or via videoconference, or to reschedule an existing appointment.

How does the virus affect children?

The number of reported cases of COVID-19 in children under age 19 remains relatively low compared with reported cases in adults. However, there may be many children with mild infection who have not been tested or identified yet, so it is difficult to know the actual number infected.

What should I do if my child gets a fever?

As always when you have a health concern about your child, please call your care team.

- **Weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.:**
Call 617-632-3270 and ask to speak to a triage nurse.
- **After hours or on weekends:**
Call the page operator at 617-632-3352 and ask to page the pediatric fellow on call for oncology or stem cell transplant or for patients in our bone marrow failure clinic, the hematology fellow.

Why are staff wearing face masks?

All members of your care team are now required to wear protective face masks while at work to help further protect our patients. This is just one of many precautions we are taking to help prevent infection from COVID-19.

What should I do if I don't feel well and think I might have COVID-19?

Call your doctor or care team **before** you come to the hospital or clinic. Be sure to tell your health care provider about any chronic health conditions, such as heart or lung problems. They will guide you on the best next steps.

Is there anything else I can do?

We know this is a stressful time for you and your family. Please talk with your child's care team about any questions or concerns you may have. We are here to support and help you.

Who can I call if I have general questions?

Call the Boston Children's Hospital Hotline at **855-281-5730** or **617-355-4200**.

Where can I learn more?

CDC coronavirus page www.cdc.gov/coronavirus
Dana-Farber www.dana-farber.org
Boston Children's www.childrenshospital.org

If you have concerns or questions, please talk with a member of your care team. Thank you for your support during this time, and for entrusting your care to us.