

Family & Consumer Sciences

Common Sense Steps to Prevent Coronavirus Disease

*Lisa Washburn, Associate Professor
Department of Family and Consumer Sciences
March 2020*

Concerns about the coronavirus and COVID-19, the respiratory illness it causes, are on the rise. Coronavirus exposure risk remains low for most people in the U.S. Those concerned about the spread of the virus want to plan ahead for prevention.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the best way to prevent illness is to avoid exposure. You can protect yourself and prevent the spread of the virus to others by following a few common sense steps.

Prevent Spread of the Virus

A few personal hygiene practices can protect you from picking up or spreading the coronavirus.

Wash Your Hands

Wash your hands with soap and water. Scrub for at least 20 seconds. Set a timer for 20 seconds or hum the “Happy Birthday” song twice. Twenty seconds may be longer than you think. Consider ramping up handwashing to reduce your risk. Most people don’t wash their hands long enough or often enough.

Wash your hands often, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating and after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol.

Encourage Others to Wash Their Hands

See a friend fly by a bathroom sink or soap dispenser without stopping to wash? Politely encourage them to do their part in curbing coronavirus by taking 20 seconds to soap up.



A few personal hygiene practices, such as washing your hands, can protect you from picking up or spreading the coronavirus.

Clean and Disinfect

Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe. Don't take your phone in the bathroom. Clean devices with glass screens regularly using a soft, lint-free cloth dampened with warm soapy water.

Avoid Touching Your Face

Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. The virus that causes COVID-19 may survive on surfaces (although it is unknown for how long). Keep hands away from your face to prevent transfer of germs to these virus-vulnerable areas.

If You Are Sick

In addition to practicing the common sense steps above, people who are sick should take some extra precautions to avoid spreading the virus. COVID-19 symptoms include fever, cough and shortness of breath. If you have these symptoms and have had close contact with an infected person, live in, or have traveled to an area where the virus has spread, call ahead to a health care professional. Your provider will work with public health officials to determine if you should be tested for coronavirus.

Stay Home

Stay home if you are sick with cold or flu symptoms or any other illness. COVID-19 symptoms may be mild to severe and appear from 2 to 14 days after exposure. Symptoms include fever, cough and shortness of breath.

Cover Coughs and Sneezes

Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or the crook of your elbow. Toss tissues promptly, then wash your hands. Keep a box of tissue close and grab a fresh one to catch the next cough.

Avoid Close Contact With Others

Coronavirus spreads through respiratory droplets released when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Airborne virus-containing droplets can spread about 6 feet. Avoid close contact with others when you are sick. Others should avoid close contact with you until you are better.



AG.TENNESSEE.EDU

D 76 03/20 20-0181 Programs in agriculture and natural resources, 4-H youth development, family and consumer sciences, and resource development. University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture and county governments cooperating. UT Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.