

What is COVID-19?

Coronaviruses can cause different diseases, including the common cold. COVID-19 is a new type of coronavirus that was just discovered in December 2019. Its name comes from **CO**rona**VI**rus **D**isease **2019**. Since it is so new, we are still learning about it.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19?

Most people with COVID-19 have symptoms of:

1. Fever
2. Cough
3. Shortness of breath
4. Tiredness

There are other less common symptoms, like diarrhea.

Most people who get COVID-19 have mild to moderate symptoms. This might be similar to a common cold or the flu. About 80% of people can recover at home without special treatment.

You can also have COVID-19 and have no symptoms at all. This group is tricky, because they might spread the virus without knowing they have it. This is not common and may not be the main way the virus spreads.

There is also a group of people who can get very sick with COVID-19. About 20% of people with more severe disease need to stay in the hospital and may need care in an intensive care unit. Sadly, COVID-19 can cause death.

Symptoms of severe disease can include:

1. Trouble breathing
2. Chest pain or pressure in the chest
3. Confusion
4. Weakness
5. Bluish lips or bluish face

HOW DOES COVID-19 SPREAD?

There are a few ways COVID-19 can spread:

1. COVID-19 can be passed from person to person. This happens between people who are in close contact with each other (within 6 feet). The virus can be transmitted by small droplets from cough or sneezes. This is why people are most contagious when they have symptoms. People who have the virus can also spread it before developing symptoms.
2. It is also possible to get COVID-19 by touching a contaminated surface or object and then touching your own mouth, nose or eyes.

WHAT IS A PANDEMIC?

When a new disease spreads worldwide, it is called a pandemic. This means the infection is spreading across different continents at the same time. COVID-19 was called a pandemic by the World Health Organization on March 11, 2020.

SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS IN CHILDREN WITH SKIN CONDITIONS

We don't know of any skin diseases that put children at higher risk of COVID-19 or at higher risk of more severe disease. We do know that some children and teens might be taking systemic medications for their skin disease. Some of these systemic medications can suppress or weaken their immune system.

If your child is taking immunosuppressive and/or biologic therapy, they may be at increased risk of infection with COVID-19. They may also be at higher risk of having more severe disease. At this time, we don't know the risks or the benefits of discontinuing these treatments. The risk of the skin disease worsening if the medication is stopped needs to be balanced against the likelihood of COVID-19 infection and severe disease if infected.

Patients on these medications are encouraged to reach out to their pediatric dermatologist or prescribing health care provider to discuss the risks and make an individualized plan. You might also want to discuss what to do in case of an exposure or active infection with COVID-19.

ARE CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK OF SEVERE COVID-19?

Healthy children seem to be at lower risk for severe COVID-19. There are some children who might be at higher risk. For example, children with underlying medical problems like heart disease, lung disease (including asthma), cancer, diabetes, or suppressed immune systems may be at higher risk of severe disease. Children may have suppressed immune systems from immune deficiencies, cancer treatment, bone marrow or organ transplantation, HIV/AIDS, or immunosuppressive medications.

HOW CAN I PREVENT INFECTION FROM COVID-19?

There is currently no vaccine for COVID-19. The best way to prevent COVID-19 is to avoid exposure to the virus. This includes:

- 1. Handwashing:** Keeping hands clean is key to prevent infection. Washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds should help keep hands clean. Children may find it helpful to sing a song while washing their hands. Key handwashing moments: after being in a public place, before eating, before and after touching one's face, after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose.
- 2. Hand sanitizer:** Instead of soap and water, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer may be used. It should contain at least 60% alcohol. Hands should be rubbed together until alcohol dries.
- 3. Avoid touching your face:** If you avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth, the virus is not going to find a way into your body.
- 4. Social distancing:** This is important to reduce the spread of the virus. This means limiting the number of people you have contact with. Families should stay at home as much as possible, except for essential reasons. This also means no play dates or parties and avoiding outdoor parks and playgrounds.
- 5. Stay home if you are sick:** Anyone who is sick needs to stay home and stay away from others in the home. You need to do this for 14 days.
- 6. Wear a mask** when outside or when going out for essential needs, especially if you are sick or if you live in an area with many people who are infected with COVID-19.
- 7. Cover coughs and sneezes:** You can use tissue or cough/sneeze in the inside of your elbow.
- 8. Children must stay away from those who are ill.**
- 9. Clean and disinfect:** All frequently touched surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected daily. For example, phones, tablets, doorknobs, tables, toilets, sinks, remote controls, etc. You can use diluted bleach, alcohol or other household disinfectants.

TIPS TO AVOID IRRITATION FROM FREQUENT HANDWASHING:

If you tend to get dry skin or hand eczema, handwashing and/or alcohol sanitizers can irritate your hands. Remember to moisturize after each time you wash or sanitize your hands. Moisturizers should be thicker such as creams or ointments and fragrance-free. Avoid lotions or gels. If irritation develops, treat with your topical medications to control the irritation.



The Society for Pediatric Dermatology
8365 Keystone Crossing, Suite 107
Indianapolis, IN 46240
(317) 202-0224
www.pedsderm.net

Contributing SPD Member:
Irene Lara-Corrales, MD

Committee Reviewers:
Esteban Fernandez Faith, MD
Jillian Rork, MD

Expert Reviewers:
Sheilagh Maguiness, MD
Kelly Cordoro, MD

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