

# Coronaviruses



## WHAT IS IT?

**Coronaviruses** are a large family of viruses affecting humans and animals. Named for the crown-like spikes that are on their surface, human coronaviruses were first identified in the mid-1960s but have likely circulated for centuries. With most coronaviruses causing only mild respiratory symptoms, nearly everyone is infected with coronaviruses at some time in their life. Coronaviruses primarily cause upper respiratory tract symptoms in humans, and may cause gastrointestinal symptoms in animals. Viral spread occurs from respiratory droplets from an infected individual.

## WHY SHOULD I CARE?

- **7** coronavirus types can infect people, most cause mild symptoms (e.g., common cold)
- **3** have caused serious illness in recent years: SARS (**2002**), MERS (**2012**), & COVID-19 (**2019+**)
- Mortality rates vary as well:  
MERS: **30-40%**; SARS: **10%**; COVID-19: **2%**

Additionally:

- Coronaviruses can evolve to spread from animals (e.g., camels, cats & bats) to humans causing disease

## SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Some or all of these may present with different coronavirus types:



## WHAT DO I DO ABOUT IT?

Because minimizing contact with infectious viral particles is crucial to limit spread, prevention includes:

1. Stay isolated when ill.
2. Avoid close contact with others by maintaining a physical distance of at least 6 feet.
3. Cover coughs and sneezes.
4. Wear a face mask that completely covers the nose and mouth.
5. Wash hands with soap for 20 seconds.
6. Clean and disinfect surfaces that may have viral particles on them.
7. Get vaccinated when possible.
8. Consult a medical professional who may prescribe antiviral drugs.

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