



The GW Medical  
Faculty Associates

School of Medicine  
& Health Sciences  
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY



THE GEORGE WASHINGTON  
UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

# GW COVID-19 FAQ

April 7, 2020

## GW PREPAREDNESS AND PROTOCOLS

**We rely on the ER for emergencies like heart attack, stroke, retinal detachment, appendicitis and injuries related to accidents and crime. For those of us who have medical emergencies not related to COVID-19, what should we do to help your ER and specialist staffs help us?**

GW Hospital is fully operational and able to provide the same level of care in the ER as it always does outside of this current pandemic. If you have an emergency, GW Hospital's ER is available to you. However, we recommend taking the proper steps to stay as healthy as possible, to avoid emergencies when possible. Here are some tips for staying healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Make sure you have at least a one-month supply of all your medication, and continue to refill as needed. Pharmacies remain open and operational.
- Continue to eat a healthy diet. To avoid exposure at the grocery store, consider having a friend drop off your groceries, or try ordering them online.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Continue to move. Exercise indoors by doing chores, or simple floor exercises.
- Stay hydrated with water and electrolytes.

For non-emergencies, reach out to your healthcare provider and ask for telemedicine options or ask to schedule a phone consultation. If you need to go in person to the clinic for an exam or test, you will be screened upon arrival for COVID-19 by having your temperature taken. Clinics are taking additional precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

### **What if I don't have a Primary Care Physician, but I have symptoms of COVID-19?**

If you develop symptoms of illness, stay home and contact your healthcare provider. If you do not have a primary care physician, you can call the GW Medical Faculty Associates at 202-741-2222 to schedule a telehealth appointment, or you can call one of the GW Immediate and Primary Care locations in Cleveland Park, McPherson Square and Rhode Island Avenue to make an appointment:

- Cleveland Park, 202-525-5287
- McPherson Square, 202-798-0100
- Rhode Island Ave, 202-544-7580

### **What about the new Drive-Through Testing Site on GW's Campus?**

If you are experiencing fever, cough and shortness of breath, you may qualify for GW's drive-through testing for COVID-19. Testing is by appointment only on the GW campus in Foggy Bottom. To make an appointment, call 202-741-2765 during business hours and schedule a video or phone consultation with a GW Healthcare Provider. If you meet the qualifications for testing, the provider

will schedule you an appointment for a drive-through test. For more information visit [GWCovid19Testing.com](http://GWCovid19Testing.com).

**How does someone access a telemedicine consult?**

If you have fever, cough and shortness of breath, call 202-741-2765 during business hours and schedule a video or phone consultation with a GW Healthcare Provider. If you meet the qualifications for COVID-19 testing, the provider will schedule you an appointment for a drive-through test. For more information visit [GWCovid19Testing.com](http://GWCovid19Testing.com).

**What if I don't have a car, but I have COVID-19 symptoms and want to get tested?**

Walk-up testing is also available by appointment only at the GW Medical Faculty Associates Ambulatory Care Center at 2150 Pennsylvania Ave, NW and at three GW Immediate and Primary Care sites within DC at Cleveland Park, McPherson Square and Rhode Island Avenue:

- Cleveland Park, 202-525-5287
- McPherson Square, 202-798-0100
- Rhode Island Ave, 202-544-7580

A medical evaluation and testing referral is required prior to making an appointment. Testing is by appointment only. For more information, please go to [GWCovid19Testing.com](http://GWCovid19Testing.com).

**If I need to go to the ER, what should a loved one who would normally accompany us to the ER expect or do differently?**

GW Hospital has implemented visitor restrictions to ensure everyone's safety. Due to an increased number of confirmed COVID-19 cases across the Metropolitan DMV area, The George Washington University Hospital is temporarily restricting all visitors, as of March 13, 2020. Exceptions to these restrictions can be made in special circumstances, and by prior approval by the Incident Commander, including:

- End of life care.
- The guardian of a pediatric/neonatal patient.
- Labor and delivery – one visitor (this includes either the professional support person or one loved one). Visitor must remain in the hospital for duration of stay.

To seek approval for visitation, call 202-715-4195.

For all visitor exceptions approved, individuals who are visiting are subject to screening and will be prohibited if they have been in contact with someone with fever, cough or influenza-like symptoms within the last 48 hours; a known or suspected COVID-19 patient; and/or have traveled to an affected country or domestic region with high activity in the last 14 days. Additionally, individuals will be required to practice effective hand hygiene upon entering the facility as well as entering and exiting a patient room.

**What are the procedures in place at the hospital for staff members who test positive for COVID-19? Are co-workers/patients they have come into contact with them informed and monitored?**

GW Hospital is following CDC guidance as it pertains to any COVID-19 exposure. With each exposure, GW Hospital works collaboratively with the DC Department of Health, any physicians and staff members that may have been involved, and we are notifying patients who may have been

exposed. GW Hospital has recommended that our providers and employees wear masks in an effort to reduce exposure and protect our patients.

GW Hospital, GW School of Medicine and Health Sciences, and the GW Medical Faculty Associates, along with the GW University, are working closely and regularly to be proactive to this current outbreak. We are following guidelines from CDC, WHO and DC Department of Health including:

- Early identification of suspected patients
- Appropriate isolation of such patients – droplet and airborne
- Use of the CDC recommended PPE
- Patient testing under CDC guidelines

**According to University of Washington projections, the District of Columbia is likely to have sufficient hospital and ICU beds for peak utilization, and is projected to need 52 invasive ventilators. Do hospitals in the DC area have enough ventilators to meet these projections?**

At this time, and upon consultation with the Washington, D.C. Department of Health, GW Hospital has enough ventilators to meet the immediate growing need for COVID-19 patients. If the hospital sees a dramatic increase in COVID-19 patients, supply counts will be reassessed in collaboration with the Department of Health and the CDC.

**Are you exploring ideas to alleviate the situation where the hospital may not have enough patient beds? Could you share some information on projects you are looking into?**

GW Hospital is part of a corporate partnership with Universal Health Services (UHS), which has allowed us to be able to source a number of resources locally and nationally. We are working closely with DC Department of Health on what is referred to as “catastrophic surge planning.” We have identified possible sites to house medical surge expansion in the city should that be necessary. We are working in collaboration with DC government, The GW School of Medicine and Health Sciences, the Medical Faculty Associates, the GW Milken School of Public Health, the GW School of Nursing, the GW University, and UHS to ensure care for our community.

## SYMPTOMS AND TREATMENT

**Cough and shortness of breath can be characteristics of regular lung disease, like asthma and COPD. How could one distinguish if the symptoms are “normal” lung disease or COVID-19?**

It is true that symptoms such as cough and shortness of breath are associated with COVID-19 as well as other lung diseases. However, other common symptoms we are seeing with COVID-19 also include fever, GI symptoms (diarrhea) and a loss of taste/smell. These are not common symptoms seen with asthma or COPD. If you have NEW symptoms, other than what you normally experience with lung disease, you should contact your healthcare provider.

**Once I’ve tested positive, what do I need to do to know that I’m not contagious? Will there be a test that can tell if someone had COVID but is now healthy?**

If you have tested positive for COVID-19, you must stay in isolation for the period recommended by your healthcare provider. Testing requirements are instructed by the Department of Health. If you had COVID-19, you should be in touch with a healthcare provider over the phone or via telemedicine and they will let you know when you no longer need to quarantine. Screening for asymptomatic patients is not currently happening.

**It is Allergy season and so hard to determine if symptoms are allergy or COVID. How can one distinguish?**

There are some symptoms that are similar between respiratory illnesses. This chart from the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America can help you figure out if you may be feeling symptoms of allergies or a respiratory illness like COVID-19.

Symptoms	Coronavirus* (COVID-19) Symptoms range from mild to severe	Cold Gradual onset of symptoms	Flu Abrupt onset of symptoms	Seasonal Allergies Abrupt onset of symptoms
 Length of symptoms	7-25 days	Less than 14 days	7-14 days	Several weeks
 Cough	Common (usually dry)	Common (mild)	Common (usually dry)	Rare (usually dry unless it triggers asthma)
 Shortness of breath	Sometimes	No**	No**	No**
 Sneezing	No	Common	No	Common
 Runny or stuffy nose	Rare	Common	Sometimes	Common
 Sore throat	Sometimes	Common	Sometimes	Sometimes (usually mild)
 Fever	Common	Short fever period	Common	No
 Feeling tired and weak	Sometimes	Sometimes	Common	Sometimes
 Headaches	Sometimes	Rare	Common	Sometimes (related to sinus pain)
 Body aches and pains	Sometimes	Common	Common	No
 Diarrhea	Sometimes	No	Sometimes for children	No

\*Information is still evolving. \*\*Allergies, colds and flus can all trigger asthma, which can lead to shortness of breath. COVID-19 is the only one associated with shortness of breath on its own. Sources: Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. edited 3/27/20 • aafa.org/covid19

**What if I have exposure to someone who tested positive for COVID-19?**

If you were exposed to someone who tested positive for COVID-19, you should self-quarantine for 14 days.

**What if I have secondary exposure to someone who tested positive?**

Secondary exposure occurs when you have been exposed to someone who has been exposed to someone with COVID-19. CDC guidelines do not require any additional precautions or changes for the individual with secondary exposure. You do not need to report or self-quarantine unless you are directly exposed to someone with COVID-19 or become ill with a fever or cough.

**Are there heightened risks for those with Pacemakers who have also had valve replacements & are on Coumadin?**

Anyone with a heart condition is considered a high risk individual. You should continue to practice social distancing and stay away from public places.

**Please tell me more about ibuprofen dangers. I use it for arthritis. I am 75 with two lung conditions.**

We recommend calling your regular physician to discuss the risks and benefits of continuing ibuprofen use.

## PERSONAL PROTECTION

**I see according to the CDC guidelines, for those people known or suspected of having COVID-19, those caring for them should use disposable face masks and then throw them away after each use when they come in contact with the patient, to prevent or slow transmissions within households. For household caregivers, will the hospital have sufficient PPE to provide facemasks or gloves to provide households [in the community] with sufficient supplies to be able to comply with these guidelines?**

GW Hospital has a reserved PPE supply for clinical staff and patients. We recommend following CDC guidelines as it pertains to PPE. For help finding resources for PPE, we recommend calling your local Department of Health. The Department of Health will develop protocols for distribution of PPE from a community standpoint.

**Can I re-use my 95N mask multiple times for an hour at a time?**

There is no way of determining the maximum possible number of safe reuses for an N95 respirator as a generic number to be applied in all cases. Safe N95 reuse is affected by a number of variables that impact respirator function and contamination over time. For information on how to safely reuse your N95 mask, visit

<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/hcwcontrols/recommendedguidanceextuse.html>.

**Should we clean off all of our groceries with wipes or a bleach solution?**

At the very least, you should wash your hands thoroughly after touching your groceries, and avoid touching your face. If you have disinfectant wipes, wipe down your groceries and the areas of your house that they touched. You can throw away disposable packaging. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offers advice for cleaning and disinfecting your home during the pandemic, including which cleaners work best against SARS-CoV-2.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/disinfecting-your-home.html>

**I am a high-risk person -- a lively 66-yr old with newly diagnosed but well-controlled COPD. Is it safe for me to do laundry, ride in the elevator with a stranger, and/or pick up my mail & parcels from an outdoor locker structure at my apartment building full of students?**

We recommend following CDC guidelines for high risk patients for avoiding other people to the best of your ability and staying in your home unless absolutely necessary. Reach out to community organizations to find help if you have limited mobility or lack access to resources. If you have to venture out of your home, plan ahead. Where do you need to go? Can you do it early in the

morning when less people are out? Can you do everything in one trip? Be focused and diligent when outside of your home. Keep a minimum of 6-foot distance between you and others. Try to avoid being in small rooms with other people. Take the elevator alone. Be careful about what you touch, and don't touch your face at all until you can wash your hands thoroughly. Bring sanitizer with you and use it repeatedly. Wear a mask if you have one.

**Do sleeves need washing after coughing (and touching things)?**

CDC recommends laundering items to disinfect them. If you have touched a surface that may have been infected with your sleeve, do not touch your face with that part of your clothing. When you get home, wash the item according to the manufacturer's instructions. Use the warmest appropriate water setting and dry items completely. For more information on properly cleaning and disinfecting, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/disinfecting-your-home.html>.

**Given the shortage or non-availability of masks, can an ordinary person use a scarf to cover their nose or mouth?**

On April 3, 2020, the CDC made new recommends for covering your face when in public. According to the CDC, we now know from recent studies that a significant portion of individuals with coronavirus lack symptoms ("asymptomatic") and that even those who eventually develop symptoms ("pre-symptomatic") can transmit the virus to others before showing symptoms. This means that the virus can spread between people interacting in close proximity—for example, speaking, coughing, or sneezing—even if those people are not exhibiting symptoms.

In light of this new evidence, CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings, such as a mask, bandana or scarf, in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain, such as grocery stores and pharmacies. The cloth face coverings recommended are not N-95 respirators.

If you wear a face covering, wash your hands before putting it on. Wear a cloth covering that can be washed and reused. For more information, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html>.

## COMMUNITY PREVENTION

**Is it safe to visit our grandchildren?**

Children are very good at spreading viruses. They often don't understand social distancing and they want to interact with you. At this time, we recommend social distancing as advised by the CDC. You might consider using virtual means to engage, like Zoom or Facetime. If they live nearby, perhaps they could walk by your home, and you can say hello from a safe distance.

**Is it safe to visit our adult son, who has type 1 diabetes and is recovering from major surgery for an abscessed heel? Are we a danger to him?**

At this time, we recommend social distancing as advised by the CDC, and maintaining distance from anyone besides your immediate family that lives with you. You might consider using virtual means to engage, like Zoom or Facetime, in addition to phone calls.

**Do you have any recommendations for people living in apartment buildings? If a neighbor has COVID, is it ok to leave the windows open? What about HVAC units?**

At this time, the CDC is recommending a distance of 6 feet. According to the CDC, early reports suggest person-to-person transmission most commonly happens during close exposure to a person infected with COVID-19, primarily via respiratory droplets produced when the infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. Droplets can land in the mouths, noses, or eyes of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs of those within close proximity. Recent studies indicate that people who are infected but do not have symptoms likely also play a role in the spread of COVID-19. The contribution of small respiratory particles, sometimes called aerosols or droplet nuclei, to close proximity transmission is currently uncertain. However, airborne transmission from person-to-person over long distances is unlikely. Therefore, the distance between windows and apartment units meets current CDC guidelines for safe distancing.

**I live in a pedestrian neighborhood. Even in the early morning, there are joggers everywhere charging toward you on the sidewalk, breathing heavily by mouth and not keeping 6 feet away as they run by. Is this a risk for pedestrians?**

The CDC recommends social distancing of at least 6 feet. The District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia governments have all enforced this with Stay Home policies. Governments do, however, recommend fresh air and exercise. If you get your exercise outside, be mindful of keeping at least 6 feet of distance between yourself and others. You may consider wearing a homemade mask, such as a bandana or scarf while in public. If the path you are on is too narrow or crowded, you may consider detouring to a less populated route.

## GENERAL COVID-19 QUESTIONS

### **What is COVID-19?**

The 2019 Coronavirus, or COVID-19, is a new respiratory virus first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in December 2019. It is part of a larger family of viruses called coronavirus, some of which are in circulation normally and can cause illnesses like the common cold. This Coronavirus is not the same strain coronavirus as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) or Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

### **Where is COVID-19?**

The first confirmed case of the COVID-19 in the United States was reported in January 2020. Since then, cases have spread throughout the US. This is an evolving situation.

### **How is COVID-19 spread?**

According to the CDC, the virus is thought to have originated from an animal but is now spreading from person to person. Coronaviruses, including this new one, are thought to spread via exposure to an infected person's respiratory droplets—such as those produced when a person coughs or sneezes. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes. This is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads, but we are still learning more about this virus. CDC recommends people practice frequent “hand hygiene,” which is either washing hands with soap or water or using an alcohol-based hand rub. CDC also recommends routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces.

**How long after infection are symptoms apparent?**

Public health officials say the symptoms may appear 2 to 14 days after exposure to the virus.

**How can I help protect myself from getting COVID-19?**

The CDC recommends some simple steps to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, including:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds with warm water or use an alcohol-based sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid crowds.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue and then, throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Use a tissue or sleeve to avoid touching high-touch surfaces in public places, such as elevator buttons, door handles, handrails, etc.
- Have enough household supplies, groceries and medications on hand, to avoid repeated trips to the store and to have an ample supply in the event you need to quarantine.