

NBNA COVID-19 Primer
Coronavirus: A Primer for Communities of Color

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On Wednesday, March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) a global pandemic. The purpose of this brief commentary is to provide fact-based information that we, as healthcare providers, can utilize, as we support and educate our communities across the nation.

WHAT IS A VIRUS?

A virus is a microscopic organism made up of genetic material (i.e., deoxyribonucleic acid [DNA] or ribonucleic acid [RNA]) able to penetrate a human (host) cell, quickly reproduce, spread, and cause disease that the host's immune system cannot exterminate.

WHAT IS A CORONAVIRUS?

Coronavirus is the name for a broad family of virus. The latest or novel coronavirus is a newly identified type of RNA coronavirus which the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses has named SARS-CoV-2 (2019-nCoV).

WHAT IS CORONAVIRUS DISEASE?

Coronaviruses cause respiratory illnesses in humans. A person who is infected with coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 and displays symptoms of respiratory illness may be diagnosed with an associated coronavirus-19 disease also known as COVID-19.

IS COVID-19 CONTAGIOUS?

Yes. The coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) that causes COVID-19 appears to be highly contagious.

HOW IS CORONAVIRUS SPREAD?

DIRECT TRANSMISSION: Means spread through direct physical contact with an infected or colonized person.

INDIRECT TRANSMISSION: Means spread of infectious droplets into the air through sneezing and coughing or when infected droplets land on surfaces or objects such as countertops, doorknobs, and telephones.

HOW TO PROTECT MYSELF AND HELP PREVENT THE SPREAD OF CORONAVIRUS?

Avoid close contact with people who are sick| Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands| Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds| Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available| Stay home when you are sick| Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash| Limit social interaction| Avoid crowded places and non-essential travel| Practice social distancing| Isolate yourself from other family members| Monitor your health| Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces^{1,2}

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS AND COMPLICATIONS OF COVID-19?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, symptoms can range from mild to severe. Common symptoms include cough, fever and shortness of breath. Complications include pneumonia, multi-organ failure, and death.²

IS THERE A CURE FOR COVID-19?

No. There is currently no vaccine or antiviral treatment for COVID-19. The current treatment protocol is symptom specific.

WHAT TO DO SHOULD YOU GET SICK?

If you get sick with flu-like symptoms, and are not in a high-risk group, in most cases, you should self-isolate except to get medical care, treat symptoms and stay hydrated. If, however, you are in a high-risk group (including young children, people 65 and older, pregnant women, cancer patients, patients with diabetes, heart or lung disease and other medical conditions), or are very sick or worried about your illness, contact your health care provider.²

REFERENCES

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