



# VILLAGE OF NORRIDGE

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## ***INFORMATION FROM THE VILLAGE OF NORRIDGE HEALTH COMMISSIONER DR. RICHARD VIGLIONE***

### How Bad is COVID-19 / Facts vs Fiction

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are known to cause respiratory illness in people and animals. Coronaviruses range from the common cold to more severe diseases. The "Wuhan Coronavirus," as this new coronavirus is called in media reports, has been officially named as COVID-19 by the World Health Organization. (Its temporary name was 2019 novel coronavirus or 2019-nCoV.)

Signs and symptoms of illness from the novel coronavirus include fever, cough and difficulty breathing. Early symptoms of exposure to the coronavirus are like that of the flu. They include:

- Chills
- Body aches
- Sore throats
- Headaches
- Nausea or vomiting
- Runny noses

Common signs of infection from other coronaviruses can include respiratory symptoms, fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. In more severe cases, infection from those viruses can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death.

COVID-19, can be transmitted between people, usually after close contact with an infected patient. A close contact is someone who has been within approximately six feet of a person confirmed to have Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) for a prolonged period without wearing protective gear, such as gowns and gloves. As with cold or flu viruses, the COVID-19 coronavirus can be spread through coughing and sneezing, close personal contact and touching surfaces that have the virus on them.





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The number of confirmed cases globally has reached over 42,000, but the rise in cases has been slowing since February 6<sup>th</sup>. This suggests China's decision to limit people's movements in the most affected province, Hubei, is working and that containment may be effective. That isn't certain, however. The decline may also reflect overwhelmed hospitals or testing labs. Studies continue to estimate that there are far more cases in China than those reported. Tests of people repatriated from China hint there are many mild and asymptomatic cases, who may be able to spread the virus but aren't necessarily being tested or quarantined.

Even if mild cases are being tested, they may not have been making it into official figures. Diagnostic guidelines issued last week in China say people without symptoms who test positive for the virus as part of efforts to trace contacts of known cases should only be counted as confirmed cases if they start showing symptoms. Symptoms would include those listed above.

As for death rates, these are hard to calculate early in an epidemic. There is far more death that occurs from the influenza virus worldwide. Based on the rate of rise of deaths, some 18 per cent of people confirmed to have the virus in the Chinese city of Wuhan die. This is like earlier estimates. However, to get tested in Wuhan because of illness, not as part of contact tracing, you must have pneumonia or worse. This means death rates among confirmed cases in Wuhan are likely to be higher than among groups that include milder illness.

There were at least 24,000 new cases a day in Wuhan. The current fall in case reports number around 3,000 a day. This could also mean that total case numbers in China may now be as many as a million. If this is the case, and if all deaths in Wuhan are being detected, then, the overall death rate is only around 1%. In China, 80% of deaths have been in people aged over 60.

The coronavirus was first detected in December 2019. In just six weeks, it is clear that the elderly are at greater risk. So are people with any underlying health conditions like heart diseases, diabetes or any other health issues. Most people who succumbed to the disease fall in these two categories. They usually suffer from a severe form of pneumonia after contracting the infection that led to organ failure. Healthy and young adults have a better chance of surviving this disease and very few fatalities are seen in children. The World Health Organization, meanwhile, also said that 8,204 of the Chinese cases are severe. This means that the rest of the cases are mild.

Much like familiar cold viruses or influenza, COVID-19 spreads primarily by respiratory droplets, which come out through saliva or when we sneeze. It is not in the air. The usual symptoms (e.g. fever, sore throat, cough, headache) are very



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similar to influenza and the regular cold. Those with no symptoms are less likely to have nasal discharge or cough and are hence less likely to transmit the virus. In truth, we suspect the actual risk to be very low. Most of the time, supportive care (i.e. adequate hydration, food and oxygen when needed) will work for more than 90% of patients.

Recommendations are as follows:

- 1. Go out, do what you need to do, and go back home. There is no need to avoid public places.**
- 2. Online shopping packages should be safe to handle. When the packages travel, even through Wuhan, the long process and exposure to the sun would have destroyed the virus.**
- 3. Always wash your hands with soap and water before touching your face.**
- 4. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizers on your hands and dry them thereafter. However, refrain from using wipes, as they tend to spread germs around.**

The best way to protect yourself from the spread of coronaviruses is by avoiding close contact with people who are sick, washing hands frequently and avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands. Additionally, health experts are recommending safe food practices and avoiding animals and uncooked meat if traveling in affected areas. The CDC does not currently recommend the use of facemasks among the general public. Older travelers and those with underlying health issues may be at risk for more severe disease and should discuss travel to affect areas with their physician.

Diagnosis occurs through laboratory testing of respiratory specimens and serum (blood). The CDC is manufacturing the reagents (or liquids used to produce results in testing settings) and shipping the tests, trying to get them out as quickly as possible. Meanwhile, in China, there just aren't enough testing kits to go around. There has been a shortage of nucleic acid testing kits used to confirm the presence of the coronavirus. CT scans can detect pneumonia and quickly isolate and treat patients who have it. CT scans are convenient and can produce immediate results. Experts say people infected with the coronavirus would be likely to have lesions in both lungs.



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According to the CDC there is not a specific antiviral treatment or vaccine for the new coronavirus like there is for the flu. As the coronavirus is caused by a virus and not by bacteria, an antibiotic will not be helpful for treatment. Isolation might be warranted with separating a person or a group of people who have symptoms of illness and are believed to be infected from people who are not infected in order to prevent the spread of disease for up to 14 days.

FACT: The CDC presently doesn't know whether the virus can be contained, how deadly it is and how many people have it.

As usual, if there is any question concerning possible exposure, your health care provider should be contacted for guidance and instruction.