Coronavirus (COVID-19)

What is COVID-19?

- COVID-19 is an illness caused by a new coronavirus.
- Coronaviruses are a large family of common viruses. They usually cause mild illness similar to the common cold, however some coronaviruses can cause severe respiratory illness such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS).

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

- Symptoms of COVID-19 can range from none (asymptomatic) to severe illness.
- Common symptoms include fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. Other symptoms can include fatigue or weakness, muscle or body aches, new loss of smell or taste, headache, and gastrointestinal symptoms (abdominal pain, diarrhea, and vomiting).
- In severe cases, infection can result in pneumonia, respiratory failure, kidney failure, and death.
- Symptoms may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to the virus.

How does COVID-19 spread?

- COVID-19 is most often spread from person to person through respiratory droplets produced during speaking, coughing, or sneezing, which can travel up to 2 metres in the air.
- It can also be spread during close personal contact such as hugging or shaking hands.
- The risk of spread is increased if you are indoors, or in a space with poor air circulation.
- While less common, COVID-19 can also be spread by touching the eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands after touching a surface or object that has the virus on it.

Is there a vaccine or medication for COVID-19?

- There is no specific medicine for COVID-19 yet. People with COVID-19 may need medical care to help manage their symptoms.
- There are several vaccines that have been approved for use to protect the public from COVID-19. Vaccine rollout is currently underway.
- To book your COVID-19 vaccine, please contact your local public health unit or visit Ontario's provincial booking page at https://covid-19.ontario.ca/book-vaccine/. You can also access the provincial booking system by calling 1-888-999-6488.

What are healthcare settings doing to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

- All staff, patients, and visitors are screened for signs, symptoms, and exposures to COVID-19.
- Testing is used for any patients or staff who fail screening.
- Masks are being provided and worn hospital-wide by staff, patients, and visitors.
- Physical distancing, plastic barriers, and added cleaning practices have been incorporated into hospital operations.

What can you do to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

- Wear a properly-fitting mask that covers your nose and mouth when in pubic settings where physical distancing of 2 metres cannot be maintained.
- Clean your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid unnecessary close contact with others, and avoid crowds and indoor spaces with poor air circulation.
- Clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that you touch a lot.
- Cover your cough and sneezes with a tissue or sneeze into your elbow. Throw the tissue in the garbage and clean your hands afterwards.
- Stay home if you are not feeling well, and get tested if you think you might be sick with COVID-19 or you have been in contact with someone who is sick with COVID-19.

Adherence to infection prevention and control measures by staff <u>and</u> visitors is required to prevent further spread of the virus.

For more information, please refer to:

- [Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care](#)
- [City of Hamilton Public Health](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)](#)

Stop the spread of germs and infections. **Clean your hands.**	Did you clean them?

This fact sheet provides basic general information only and is to be used as a quick guide, not as a complete resource on the subject. If you have any further questions, ask Infection Prevention & Control or your health care provider.