



How COVID-19 Spreads

Updated Aug. 11, 2022

COVID-19 spreads when an infected person breathes out droplets and very small particles that contain the virus. These droplets and particles can be breathed in by other people or land on their eyes, noses, or mouth. In some circumstances, they may contaminate surfaces they touch.



About Variants

Many viruses are constantly changing, including the virus that causes COVID-19. These changes occur over time and can lead to the [emergence of variants](#) that may have new characteristics, including different ways of spreading.

Anyone infected with COVID-19 can spread it, even if they do **NOT** have symptoms. Learn more about what you can do to [protect yourself and others](#).



COVID-19 County Check

Find community levels and prevention steps by county. Data updated weekly.

Select a Location (all fields required)

State



County



Go

COVID-19 and Animals

COVID-19 can spread **from people to animals** in some situations. Pet cats and dogs can sometimes become infected by people with COVID-19. Learn what you should do [if you have pets](#).

Food and Water

Food

There is no evidence to suggest that handling food or consuming food can spread COVID-19. Follow *food* safety guidelines when handling and cleaning fresh produce. Do not wash produce with soap, bleach, sanitizer, alcohol, disinfectant, or any other chemical.

Drinking Water

There is also no current evidence that people can get COVID-19 by drinking water. The virus that causes COVID-19 has not been detected in drinking water. Conventional water treatment methods that use filtration and disinfection, such as those in

most municipal drinking water systems, should remove or kill the virus that causes COVID-19.

Natural Bodies of Water (Lakes, Oceans, Rivers)

There are no scientific reports of the virus that causes COVID-19 spreading to people through the water in lakes, oceans, rivers, or other natural bodies of water.

Wastewater

Genetic material from the virus that causes COVID-19 has been found in [untreated wastewater](#) (also referred to as “sewage”). There is no information to date that anyone has become sick with COVID-19 because of direct exposure to treated or untreated wastewater. Wastewater treatment plants use chemical and other disinfection processes to remove and degrade many viruses and bacteria. The virus that causes COVID-19 is inactivated by the disinfection methods used in wastewater treatment.

More Information

[Scientific Brief: SARS-CoV-2 and Potential Airborne Transmission](#)

[ASL Video Series: How does COVID-19 Spread?](#)

Last Updated Aug. 11, 2022