

2019 Novel Coronavirus

How 2019-nCoV Spreads

Much is unknown about how 2019-nCoV, a new coronavirus, spreads. Current knowledge is largely based on what is known about similar coronaviruses. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in many different species of animals, including camels, cattle, cats, and bats. Rarely, animal coronaviruses can infect people and then spread between people such as with [MERS](#), [SARS](#), and now with 2019-nCoV.

Most often, spread from person-to-person happens among close contacts (about 6 feet). Person-to-person spread is thought to occur mainly via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes, similar to how influenza and other respiratory pathogens spread. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. It's currently unclear if a person can get 2019-nCoV by touching a surface object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes.

Typically, with most respiratory viruses, people are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (sickest). With 2019-nCoV, however, there have been [reports](#) [↗](#) of spread from an infected patient with no symptoms in close contact.

It's important to note that how easily a virus spreads person-to-person can vary. Some viruses are highly contagious (e.g., measles), while other viruses are less so. There is much more to learn about the transmissibility, severity, and other features associated with 2019-nCoV and investigations are ongoing. This information will further inform the [risk assessment](#). Read the [latest 2019 Novel Coronavirus, Wuhan, China situation summary](#).