



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Louis A. Johnson VA Medical Center

COVID-19 (Coronavirus 2019) Community Outbreak Preparedness

BE INFORMED. BE PREPARED.

This guide provides you with information to help you and your family if an outbreak of COVID-19 occurs in the U.S. The guide describes actions you can take that may help lessen the impact on you and your family.

What You Need to Know

The COVID-19 (Coronavirus) is a new virus that originated in China in December 2019. Cases have been identified in the [United States](#) and other [international](#) locations. The VA Southeast Network oversees healthcare delivery for VA facilities in Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina. As of March 2, 2020, there are two confirmed cases of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Georgia involving two residents of Fulton County who live in the same household. There are no reported cases within Alabama and South Carolina.

The virus causes respiratory illness in humans, usually 2-14 days after exposure, and spreads mainly from close contact with an infected person. Like the flu, it spreads in the air and through droplets from sneezes and coughs. The droplets can stay suspended in the air and can land on surfaces that are touched by others. Illnesses have ranged from mild symptoms to severe. The most common symptoms are like the flu and common cold and include the following:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Fatigue
- Sputum Production (thick mucus coughed up from the lungs)

Most people infected with COVID-19 have mild disease and recover. Individuals at the highest risk for severe disease include people aged over 60 years and those with underlying conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer. So far, the disease in children appears to be relatively rare and mild.

What You Can Do

There are actions you can take to lessen the impact of an outbreak on you and your family

Prevention & Treatment

Follow these steps to help prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses

- Veterans should register for My HealtheVet and learn how to use VA Video Connect through the VA mobile app store or by contacting your VA care team, before any urgent problems arise.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water—Alcohol-based hand cleaners work too

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze—throw it away immediately after you use it
- Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve if you don't have a tissue
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick (use the 3' rule—stay at least 3 feet away from people who are sick)
- Try not to touch your eyes, nose or mouth—Germs often spread this way
- Get Your Flu Shot

What to Do If You Have Flu-Like Symptoms (Veterans & Staff)

VA employees and visitors, to include staff, volunteers, trainees, and Veterans and family members with flu-like symptoms (fever, cough, and shortness of breath) should call ahead before presenting to any VA site of care.

What You Should do if You Become Sick to Prevent Spread of COVID-19

- Stay home except to get medical care
- Separate yourself from other people and animals in your home; if possible, use a separate bathroom
- Call ahead before visiting your doctor
- Wear a facemask when around others and before you enter a healthcare provider's office. Please note, masks are provided by the VA for individuals exhibiting flu-like symptoms. VA does not provide masks to Veterans or staff for home isolation or quarantine.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes
- Clean your hands often
- Avoid sharing personal household items
- Clean "high-touch" surfaces daily
- Monitor your symptoms; seek prompt medical attention if your illness is getting worse. **Before** seeking care, call your healthcare provider for instructions. If you have a medical emergency and need to call 911, notify dispatch that you have COVID-19 and put on a facemask.

Control measures that may be taken by the government and communities to help limit the spread of an outbreak

Voluntary Isolation— is for people who are already sick. Being in isolation means separation from healthy people to help slow or stop the spread of disease. Care for individuals in isolation is provided in their homes, hospitals, or other healthcare facilities.

Quarantine— is for people who have been exposed to a disease but are not sick. Being in quarantine also means being separated from healthy individuals. Even though the person may not be sick or show symptoms of illness, they were exposed to the disease and may still become infectious and spread the disease to others. Quarantine may help to slow or stop a disease or illness from spreading.

Vaccination—are used to protect people from getting a virus. Currently, there is no vaccine for COVID-19.

Antivirals— Currently, there are no antivirals available to prevent or treat patients with COVID-19. There are, however, some ongoing clinical trials testing several medications that, if successful, may be available in the future.

Potential Challenges of a Severe Outbreak

Essential Services You Depend on May Be Disrupted

- Services provided by hospitals and other healthcare facilities, restaurants, government offices, telephone companies, and post offices may be limited
- Stores may close or offer limited supplies
- Unreliable public transportation due to safety precautions
- Cancellation of public gatherings and meetings, including worship services, sporting events, and musical activities
- Fuel shortages may occur
- ATMs and Banks may have limited services
- Interruption and limited food and water supplies
- Closure of schools and Daycare Centers on short notice for an extended period

Preparations

- Prepare for the possibility of temporary shortages of food, water, and other supplies.
- Consider collecting a two-week supply of non-perishable food. Select foods that do not require refrigeration or complicated preparation
- Keep a small number of cash or traveler's checks
- Make sure you have a plan for taking care of school-aged children who may not be able to attend school because of closures

Recommended Foods and Beverages

- Ready to eat canned meats, fruits & veggies
- Canned juices, milk and soup
- Peanut butter, jelly, crackers
- Instant coffee and tea bags
- Foods for infants and the elderly
- Granola Bars and Trail Mix
- Dried Foods
- Instant Meals (Cup of Noodles)
- Freeze-dried foods
- Prepackaged beverage drinks (Foil pack kids drinks)

Additional Resources

CDC Website: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html

VHA Public Health Website: www.publichealth.va.gov/n-coronavirus/index.asp