

# COVID-19 Q and A

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## **What is COVID-19?**

COVID-19 is a virus not previously seen in people. The fact that it is new is important because it means no one has any immunity to it. Each of us is likely to get sick when exposed.

## **How severe is the illness?**

Infections can range from minimal symptoms like a minor cold to severe, life-threatening illness. Severe illness can be seen in otherwise healthy individuals of any age. It appears those at highest risk for severe disease include people with chronic conditions such as heart or lung disease, diabetes, kidney disease, and those with weakened immune systems to name a few.

## **What are the symptoms of COVID-19?**

Symptoms can include fever, cough, severe shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, and new loss of taste or smell. Symptoms appear 2-14 days after exposure. **A person with COVID-19 can be contagious for a day or two before they develop any symptoms of illness.** This is called asymptomatic transmission and is why states have closed schools and many businesses. This is also why we should maintain social distance of at least 6 feet both indoors and outdoors.

## **How does COVID-19 spread?**

The virus spreads two ways. First is respiratory droplets produced mainly when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Second is when people touch a surface that has the virus on it and then touch the inside of their nose, eyes or mouth. This is why frequent hand washing helps prevent the spread.

## **What is the COVID-19 testing situation in Reedsburg?**

At the time of this writing, we have limited test kits in our community. People who do not have symptoms, will not be tested. Because of limited testing supplies at the state level, testing is being prioritized for hospitalized patients, nursing home patients and health care workers. Samples collected in an outpatient setting, even from patients with risk factors are not able to be processed in a timely fashion at the State Lab at this time. We hope testing will become more widely available soon, but have no timeframe in which this may occur. Do not be falsely reassured by low or no cases listed in your county, as numbers will stay low until our ability to test for the virus increases.

## **How long should I stay home if sick?**

If you have the symptoms of a viral respiratory disease listed above, you should stay home until your fever has been gone for 3 days and your symptoms have improved. Early information suggests acetaminophen is a better choice to treat your fever and body aches. Plan on being home for at least 7 days.

**When should I see a doctor?**

If you have symptoms that you feel you can manage at home, you do not need to see a doctor. You will not at this time be tested for COVID-19 as outlined above. If you are older, have underlying medical conditions or are not sure if you need to be seen, please call your healthcare provider. There are clinics offering virtual visits and RAMC Physicians Group is working to offer virtual visits very soon and increasing our capacity to help you over the phone. If you have severe shortness of breath or find yourself worsening after you have been improving, please seek medical care.

**When should I go to the emergency room?**

If at any time you experience extreme shortness of breath or extreme difficulty breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion or inability to arouse, bluish lips or face or feel extremely ill, go to the ER, calling first to allow them to prepare for your arrival.

**Is there a treatment for COVID-19?**

There is no specific treatment at this time. Hospitalized patients will receive supportive care such as IV fluids and oxygen.