

About

In December 2019, a new virus from the coronavirus family, initially called 2019-nCoV was detected in the city of Wuhan in China after an outbreak of atypical pneumonia was identified in the city. This virus is now called SARS-CoV-2. The disease associated with this virus is COVID-19.

The first sick people to be linked to the outbreak developed their symptoms following exposure at a seafood and live animal market in the city. The exact source of exposure in the market remains unknown. The market was closed down on January 1, 2020. Since then, person-to-person transmission has been confirmed and the virus has been found in many countries around the world.

COVID-19 is a new disease that had not been identified before the outbreak reported in December 2019. The infection often causes mild illness, but sometimes causes severe illness in some people; more specifically, people with a weakened immune system or a chronic disease. In rare cases, infection can lead to death.

About coronaviruses

SARS-CoV-2 belongs to the coronavirus family. Some viruses in this family cause disease in animals, while others cause disease in humans. In rare cases, coronaviruses that infect animals can also infect people. In Québec, there is no evidence to suggest a risk of human infection caused by animals or animal products. Coronaviruses can be spread between people through close contact. In addition to SARS-CoV-2, two other coronaviruses are transmitted from animals to humans and have caused serious diseases in humans, namely, SARS-CoV in 2003 and MERS-CoV since 2012.

Update on the outbreak

In Québec, to date, four cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed. There is one case of COVID - 19 for which another analysis is required for an official confirmation.

For the situation **in Canada**, go to the [Current situation](#) section on the Government of Canada's site.

The overall risk remains low in Canada.

For information on the level of risk abroad, go to the [Information for travellers](#) section.

Symptoms and treatment

The main symptoms are as follows:

- Fever
- Cough
- Difficulty breathing

The symptoms can be mild (similar to a cold) or more severe (similar to those associated with pneumonia and respiratory or kidney failure).

In rare cases, infection can lead to death. People most at risk of complications are those with a weakened immune system or a chronic disease and older people.

Development of symptoms

Québec residents who develop fever or cough symptoms or respiratory difficulties when they return from a trip outside of Canada are invited to contact [Info-Santé 811](#). As needed, the caseworker will tell them what institution to visit for a check-up. If a consultation is required, it is important for residents to inform the health care facility about their travel history before they go to the facility or when they arrive so that the necessary preventive measures can be taken.

Treatment

There is no specific treatment or vaccine for the COVID-19. Supportive treatment can, however, be provided.

Most people with COVID-19 will recover on their own.

Modes of transmission

Modes of transmission of human coronaviruses

Investigations are ongoing concerning COVID-19. The information in the next two paragraphs is about human coronaviruses. It probably applies to COVID-19.

Coronaviruses usually cause infections of the nose, throat and lungs. In most cases, they are spread by:

- close contact with an infected person when the person coughs or sneezes;

- touching infected surfaces with your hands and then touching your mouth, nose or eyes.

In general, coronaviruses do not survive for long on objects:

- around 3 hours on inert objects with dry surfaces,
- 6 days on inert objects with wet surfaces.

Prevention

Recognized hygiene measures are recommended for everyone:

- Wash your hands often with soap under warm running water for at least 20 seconds.
- Use an alcohol-based hand rub if soap and water are not available.
- Practice proper cough and sneeze etiquette:
- Cover your mouth and nose with your arm to reduce the spread of germs.
- If you use a tissue, dispose of it as soon as possible and wash your hands afterwards.

If you are worried or anxious about the coronavirus, you can contact the Info-Social 811 psychosocial telephone consultation service. It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.