

CORONAVIRUS:

TOP QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS AND HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF



from Dr. Julie Varughese



Q: What is the coronavirus, and where did it come from?

A: Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that typically cause respiratory infections. They range from the common cold to more severe outbreaks. And, while some coronaviruses are found in humans, the majority are commonly found in certain types of animals.



Q: How likely am I to get the new coronavirus?

A: In the U.S., the likelihood of getting the new coronavirus is low unless you have traveled to a highly affected area such as China or are in very close contact with someone who's sick with coronavirus.

Q: What are some ways to protect yourself and your loved ones from getting the coronavirus?

A: Take the same preventative measures as you would to keep from getting the flu: Wash your hands frequently and cough into your elbow or a tissue. If you're feeling ill, it's best to stay home until you're feeling better, so there's less chance of spreading infection. And, if you know that someone else is sick, it's best to avoid close contact until they're also feeling better.



Q: What are the symptoms of the new coronavirus?

A: Symptoms are fever, cough, shortness of breath, and sometimes there is difficulty breathing. The symptoms are similar to the flu and other kinds of colds, so it can be a little bit hard to distinguish.

Q: Why are people in the U.S. so worried about the new coronavirus instead of the flu?

A: This new coronavirus is unfamiliar, and it feels like a heightened threat because there's so much that we don't know about the virus, whereas the flu we have known about for years. But here in the U.S., we've already had 10,000 deaths from the flu this season. So right now, I would say that the flu is a much bigger threat here at home than the coronavirus.



Q: Will masks protect against the coronavirus?

A: Masks are especially important for doctors and other health workers who are taking care of individuals that either have suspected or confirmed coronavirus. The CDC does not currently recommend the use of face masks among the general public. For most people, basic preventative measures — frequent hand washing or using hand sanitizer, covering your mouth when coughing, not touching your eyes, nose and face frequently — are going to be the more important preventative measures.

Q: How is Americares responding to the outbreak?

A: Americares is responding to the crisis by educating the public about the virus, responding to requests for assistance and sourcing personal protective equipment to safeguard health workers most at risk. We're prepared to deliver protective masks and other infection prevention and control supplies, as preventive measures will be critical to decreasing the spread of infection. We're also ready to train partner health care facilities on infection prevention and control and mobilize medical personnel to provide support if needed.

