What is COVID-19?
Novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is a new virus strain spreading from person-to-person. It is currently in the United States and many other countries, after originating in China. Health experts are concerned because this new virus has the potential to cause severe illness and pneumonia in some people — especially people over age 60 or who have weakened immune systems.

How does COVID-19 Spread?
Health experts are still learning more about the spread. Currently it is thought to spread:
- through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes
- between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet)
- by touching a surface or object with the virus and then touching the mouth, nose, or eyes

How severe is COVID-19?
Most coronavirus illnesses are mild with fever and cough. The vast majority of people with novel coronavirus infection do not require hospital care. A much smaller percentage of people get severely ill with lung and breathing problems like pneumonia. Elderly people and people with underlying medical conditions are at highest risk.

What are the symptoms?
People who have been diagnosed with novel coronavirus have reported symptoms that may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure to the virus:
- Fever
- Cough
- Difficulty breathing/shortness of breath

When do I seek medical evaluation and advice?
If you have symptoms like cough, fever, or other respiratory problems, contact your regular doctor first. Do not go to the emergency room. Emergency rooms need to be able to serve those with the most critical needs. If you have difficulty breathing, it doesn’t mean you have novel coronavirus, but you should call 911. If you’re over 60 and you have underlying conditions like diabetes, heart disease, and lung disease, come up with a plan with your doctor to identify your health risks for coronavirus and how to manage symptoms. Contact your doctor right away if you do have symptoms.
How long does coronavirus remain infectious on a surface?
Preliminary data shows that coronavirus can remain infectious for up to 6 days on a hard surface. But normal household
disinfectants are effective in killing the virus and washing your hands with soap and water will remove the virus from
your skin.

How can I protect myself from COVID-19?
It's important that everyone take steps to reduce the spread of novel coronavirus, especially to protect those who are
more vulnerable. Steps you can take to prevent spread of flu and the common cold will also help prevent coronavirus:
• wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If not available, use hand sanitizer.
• avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands
• avoid contact with people who are sick
• stay home while you are sick and avoid close contact with others
• cover your mouth/nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing
If you are traveling overseas, check for the latest COVID-19 Travel Alerts and follow the [CDC's Travelers' Health
Currently, there are no vaccines available to prevent COVID-19 infections.

How is COVID-19 Treated?
There are no medications specifically approved for COVID-19. Most people with mild COVID-19 illness will recover on
their own by drinking plenty of fluids, resting, and taking over the counter pain and fever medications. However, some
cases develop pneumonia and require medical care or hospitalization.

Should I wear a mask in public?
Public Health does not currently recommend that people wear masks when they are in public. Scientists are not sure
whether wearing a mask in public actually keeps healthy people from getting sick. However, people who are sick should
wear a mask in a healthcare setting (such as a waiting room) to avoid exposing other people when they cough or sneeze.

Testing for COVID-19
Call your healthcare professional if you feel sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, and have been in close contact
with a person known to have COVID-19, or if you have recently traveled from an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19.
There are a number of viral respiratory germs circulating right now. We understand the desire of people who are
currently sick to be tested for COVID-19, along with those who think they may be infected with COVID-19 but who
currently don’t have symptoms. Southeastern Idaho Public Health does not conduct testing. [Testing is typically
carried out by taking a swab at a health care provider's office which is then sent to a lab for testing](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/faqs.html).
Physicians do not need to have test kits to perform sample collection for COVID-19. To collect a specimen for COVID-19 at a clinic, your
health care provider will use the same swab as you would for a respiratory panel test such as the common flu. Once the
sample is collected at your health clinic, your health care provider will ship the specimen to either a commercial lab such as LabCorp, Quest, ARUP or the Idaho Bureau of Laboratories (IBL).

Is it safe to travel?
What is the current state of COVID-19?

- In the United States, many people have tested positive for COVID-19 and unfortunately, several have died. Check our website for the latest count or visit coronavirus.idaho.gov. Idaho currently has 8 cases who have tested positive for Coronavirus.

What do I do if COVID-19 starts spreading in my community?

- Stay informed about local COVID-19 activity through our website, siphidaho.org, and be aware of any signs that people in your community are getting sick. For example, watch for school dismissals or closures.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick. Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, and wash your hands often with soap or water. Don’t share personal items and clean frequently touched surfaces with soap and water.
- If you are sick, stay home. When seeking medical care, wear a facemask and keep your distance from others. If someone in your house is sick, stay home to avoid unknowingly spreading the virus to others.
- Do not attend large events, such as sporting events, conferences, or other community events if you are sick, do not feel well, or someone in your home is sick. If you aren’t sick, consider your risk of getting COVID-19 at the event before you go.
- Discourage your children from gathering with others after school. If any of the children show symptoms of COVID-19, separate them from others immediately.
- Watch your children for symptoms of COVID-19. Notify your children’s childcare facility or school if they are sick and get any classroom assignments or activities they can do from home.
- Set up a separate room for sick household members. Clean the room regularly. Do not interact with them more than necessary.
- Check in with family and friends who live alone—especially those with chronic diseases. If you live alone, ask your friends and family to check in with you if you become sick.

Is COVID-19 the same as the MERS-CoV or SARS virus?

No. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses, some causing illness in people and others that circulate among animals, including camels, cats and bats. The recently emerged COVID-19 is not the same as the coronavirus that causes Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) or the coronavirus that causes Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). However, genetic analyses suggest this virus emerged from a virus related to SARS. There are ongoing investigations to learn more. This is a rapidly evolving situation and information will be updated as it becomes available.

Protection measures for persons who are in or have recently visited (past 14 days) areas where COVID-19 is spreading

Self-isolate by staying at home if you begin to feel unwell, even with mild symptoms such as headache, low grade fever (99.1 F or above) and slight runny nose, until you recover. If it is essential for you to have someone bring you supplies or to go out, e.g. to buy food, then wear a mask to avoid infecting other people.

Why? Avoiding contact with others and visits to medical facilities will allow these facilities to operate more effectively and help protect you and others from possible COVID-19 and other viruses.

If you develop fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical advice promptly as this may be due to a respiratory infection or other serious condition. Call in advance and tell your provider of any recent travel or contact with travelers.

Why? Calling in advance will allow your health care provider to quickly direct you to the right health facility. This will also help to prevent possible spread of COVID-19 and other viruses.
Can COVID-19 be caught from a person who has no symptoms?

The main way the disease spreads is through respiratory droplets expelled by someone who is coughing or sneezing. The risk of catching COVID-19 from someone with no symptoms at all is very low. However, many people with COVID-19 experience only mild symptoms. This is particularly true at the early stages of the disease. It is therefore possible to catch COVID-19 from someone who has, for example, just a mild cough and does not feel ill. WHO is assessing ongoing research on the period of transmission of COVID-19 and will continue to share updated findings.