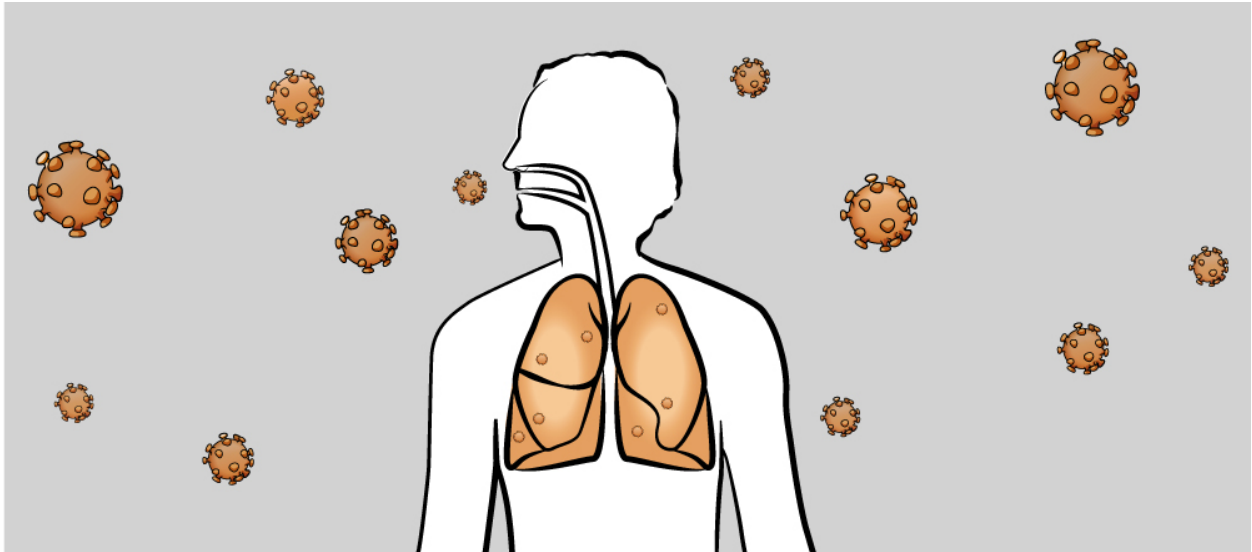


The Seattle Times

# Facts about novel coronavirus and how to prevent COVID-19

March 6, 2020 at 7:19 am Updated March 7, 2020 By [Emily M. Eng](#) *Seattle Times graphics editor*

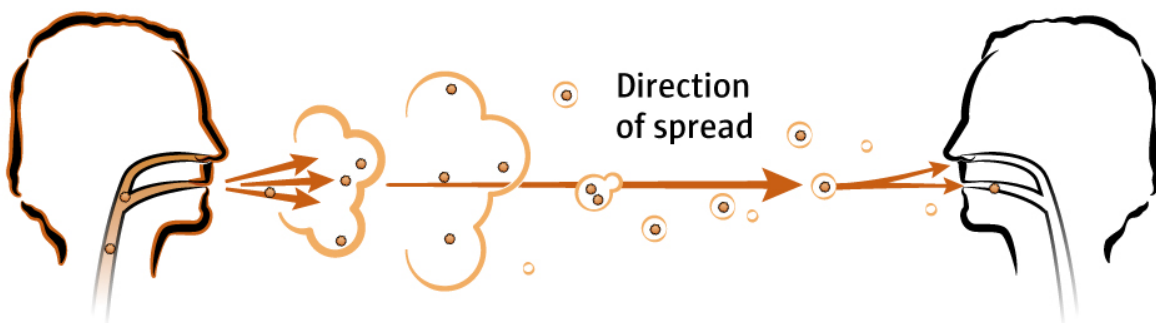


## THE BASICS

### What is coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2, known as SARS-CoV-2, is the virus strain identified in January that causes COVID-19, coronavirus disease, and is spreading from person to person. While the virus has the potential to cause severe illness and pneumonia in some people, about 80% of cases are relatively mild.

### How does this new coronavirus spread?



Its main mode of spreading is respiratory droplets produced when an infected person

coughs or sneezes. Droplets can land in the mouth or nose or be inhaled into the lungs of nearby people (within 6 feet). It may be possible for a person to be infected by touching a surface that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose or eyes.

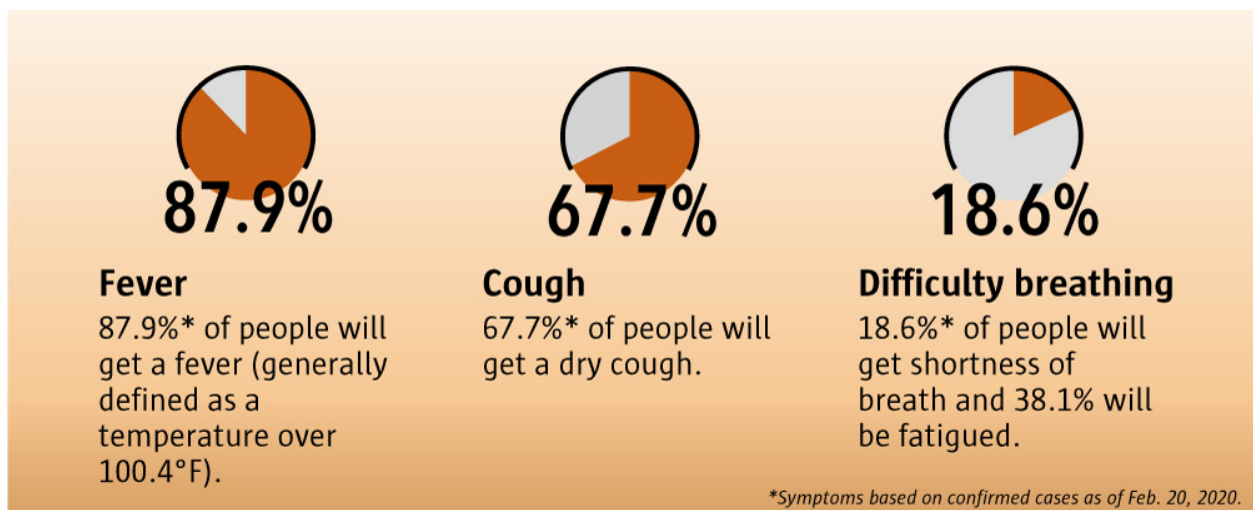
### How severe is COVID-19?

Most coronavirus illnesses are mild with fever and cough. The vast majority of people with a SARS-CoV-2 infection don't require hospital care. A much smaller percentage of people get severely ill with respiratory problems like pneumonia. Elderly people and people with underlying medical conditions are at the highest risk.

Globally, [3.4% of reported COVID-19 patients had died as of March 3](#), leading experts to say it may be 34 times more fatal than the seasonal flu. However, with many mild cases not reported, the percentage may be lower.

### Symptoms

About 99%\* of people who have the virus will get sick. On average, symptoms appear five to six days after infection, but may appear as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure to the virus.



### If you show early signs of illness

If you have symptoms and were exposed to a confirmed COVID-19 patient, call both your health care provider and, in King County, the Novel Coronavirus Call Center, 206-477-3977. You can also call the state coronavirus hotline at 800-525-0127, although this number has high traffic and may be temporarily unavailable.

If you have symptoms but don't know if you were exposed, don't head straight to the emergency room or urgent care, where you might infect others. Call your doctor about whether, when and where you should be evaluated.

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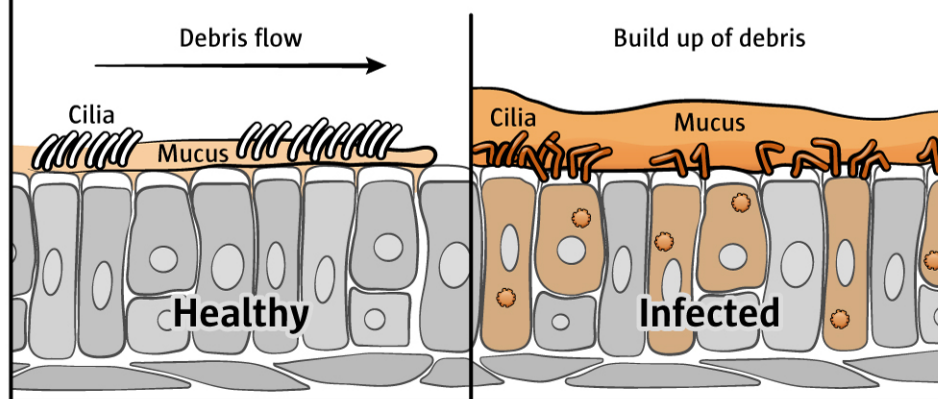
## YOUR BODY AND THE NEW CORONAVIRUS

For most patients, COVID-19 begins and ends in the lungs, although other organs and systems can be affected. The disease attacks the lungs in three phases: viral replication,

immune hyper-reactivity, and pulmonary destruction. Not all patients go through every phase, with milder cases often remaining in the first stage.

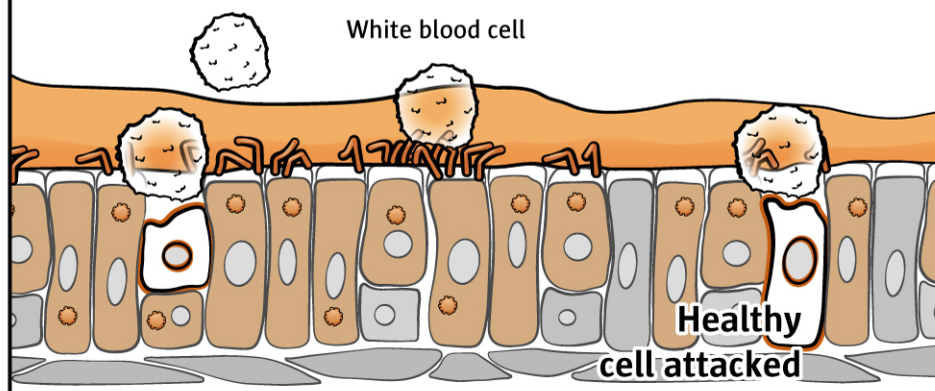
## 1. VIRAL REPLICATION

The virus invades and replicates in the lung cells – both in the ones that produce mucus and in those bearing cilia, hair-like projections that move debris out of the lungs. Affected cilia don't work normally, and a buildup of debris and fluids occurs, causing shortness of breath and, in some cases, pneumonia.



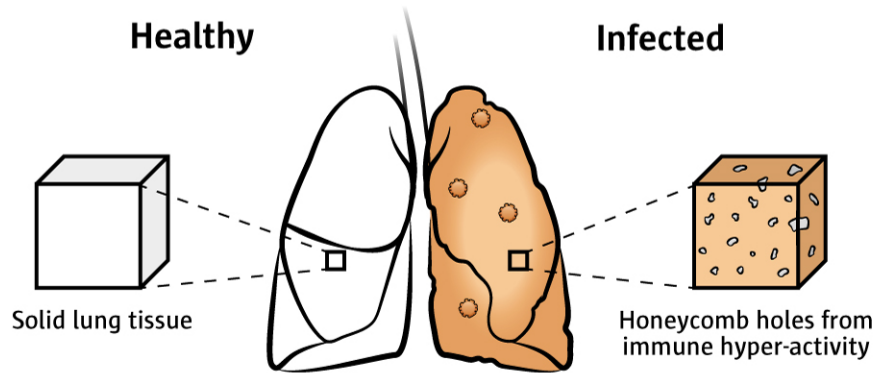
## 2. IMMUNE HYPER-REACTIVITY

Your body identifies the viral invader and sends an immune response to clear the damage and repair the lung tissue. Normally, this inflammatory response is localized to the infected areas, but sometimes the immune response is hyper-reactive and kills healthy cells, causing even more damage.



### 3. PULMONARY DESTRUCTION

As lung damage continues, pulmonary destruction can become too severe, resulting in respiratory failure.



### TREATMENT

No medications are specifically approved for COVID-19. Most people with mild coronavirus illness will recover on their own by drinking plenty of fluids, resting, and taking pain and fever medications. However, some patients develop pneumonia and require medical care or hospitalization.

### HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS

Steps you can take to prevent the flu and the common cold will also help prevent the spread of the new coronavirus:

- Wash hands often with soap and water. If that's 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 and nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing.

#### Hand-washing 101

Wash your hands as soon as you walk through the door of your home.



## Household preparation

To minimize your risk of exposure to the new coronavirus, Public Health – Seattle & King County recommends staying home, avoiding crowds and reducing close contact, a practice known as “social distancing.”

Beyond a basic emergency kit, have the daily necessities and shelf-stable foods on hand. This will help you to practice social distancing and to care for yourself and your household if someone becomes ill.

If the virus does start circulating in your community, or if someone is sick in your home, plan on cleaning surfaces that get touched frequently — such as kitchen counters, door handles and bathroom faucets — several times a day.

## Supplies to consider:

- Extra fluids, hydrating drinks (such as Gatorade and Pedialyte)
- Food for when you’re sick, like soups, broths, crackers, honey (especially nonperishable items to carry you through a couple of weeks)
- Pain and fever medications (like acetaminophen or ibuprofen)
- Cough drops, cough medications
- Prescription medications
- Tissues
- Household cleaners (bleach, alcohol, soap)

## Other languages

To help neighbors who do not speak English, King County has created fact sheets in several languages. Find them below or at [www.kingcounty.gov/covid](http://www.kingcounty.gov/covid)

新冠狀病毒 – Chinese, Traditional

신종 코로나바이러스 – Korean

**Caabuqa Xalfaafka Wadnaha** – Somali

**Nuevo coronavirus** – Spanish

**Vi-rút Corona Mới** – Vietnamese

[Download a printable version of the fact sheet here.](#)

*Note: Viruses not to scale*

*Sources: King County Public Health, World Health Organization (WHO), Dr. Matthew Frieman, University of Maryland School of Medicine, Hawaii National Public Radio, University of California San Francisco Health, Los Angeles Times, National Geographic*

## **Coronavirus resources**

- [Coronavirus information and prevention tips: a visual guide](#)
- [What Seattle area public transit riders should know](#)
- [Answers to your most common questions](#)
- [Coronavirus timeline: How the outbreak has unfolded](#)
- [Sign up for breaking news alerts](#)
- [More on coronavirus »](#)