

# Frequently Asked Questions

## General COVID-19 Questions

### Q. What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is an illness caused by a coronavirus. Human coronaviruses are common and are typically associated with mild illnesses, similar to the common cold.

Symptoms of human coronaviruses may be very mild or more serious, such as:

- fever
- cough
- difficulty breathing

Symptoms may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to the virus. Coronaviruses are most commonly spread from an infected person through:

- respiratory droplets when you cough or sneeze
- close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
- touching something with the virus on it, then touching your eyes, nose or mouth before washing your hands

These viruses are not known to spread through ventilation systems or through food or water.

The best way to prevent the spread of infections is to:

- wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds;
- avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth, especially with unwashed hands;
- avoid close contact with people who are sick;
- cough and sneeze into your sleeve and not your hands; and
- stay home if you are sick to avoid spreading illness to others.

[Source: Health Canada](#)

### Q. What are the symptoms of the 2019 novel coronavirus?

Symptoms range from mild – like the flu and other common respiratory infections – to severe, and can include:

- fever
- cough
- difficulty breathing

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You should:

- drink plenty of fluids
- get rest and sleep as much as possible
- try a humidifier or a hot shower to help with a sore throat or cough

If you need immediate medical attention you should call 911 and mention your travel history and symptoms.

[Source: Public Health Ontario](#)

## **Q. Can the 2019 novel coronavirus be spread from person-to-person?**

Coronaviruses are most commonly spread from an infected person through:

- respiratory droplets when you cough or sneeze
- close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
- touching something with the virus on it, then touching your eyes, nose or mouth before washing your hands

The best way to prevent the spread of infections is to:

- wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds;
- avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth, especially with unwashed hands;
- avoid close contact with people who are sick;
- cough and sneeze into your sleeve and not your hands; and
- stay home if you are sick to avoid spreading illness to others.

## **Q. How soon after being exposed to the 2019 novel coronavirus would symptoms occur?**

Symptoms may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to the virus.

## **Q. How is the 2019 novel coronavirus diagnosed?**

Coronavirus infections are diagnosed by a health care provider based on symptoms and are confirmed through laboratory tests.

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## Q. How can I protect myself?

There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses. Take these everyday steps to reduce exposure to the virus and protect your health:

- wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- sneeze and cough into your sleeve
- avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- avoid contact with people who are sick
- stay home if you are sick

Stay informed regarding travel. There are several active travel health notices for COVID-19. Each country or area may have different [levels of risk](#). These risk levels may change as the COVID-19 event evolves internationally.

Before you leave, check the following destinations have travel health notices issued by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) for COVID-19.

### **This list is current as of March 10, 2020:**

- [China](#)
- [France](#)
- [Germany](#)
- [Hong Kong](#)
- [Iran](#)
- [Japan](#)
- [Northern Italy](#)
- [Singapore](#)
- [South Korea](#)
- [Spain](#)

PHAC is **recommending that Canadians avoid all cruise ship travel** due to the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak.

[Source: Health Canada](#)

## Q. What do I do if I have traveled recently?

The risk to Canadian travellers abroad is generally low but will vary depending on the destination. Public Health Canada is closely monitoring the spread of COVID-19 in other

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countries. Please consult the destination page on [travel.gc.ca](http://travel.gc.ca) for the [latest travel advice](#).

If you have travelled outside Canada, it is important to monitor your health when you return to Canada. While abroad, you may have come in contact with the novel coronavirus. PHAC asks that you monitor your health for fever, cough and difficulty breathing for 14 days after you arrive in Canada. If you have these symptoms, call the [public health authority](#) in the province or territory you are in to inform them. They will provide advice on what you should do.

If you have travelled to Hubei province, China, or Iran in the last 14 days, limit your contact with others for a total of 14 days, starting the day you began your journey to Canada. This means self-isolate and **stay at home**. In addition, contact the [local public health authority in your province or territory](#) within 24 hours of arriving in Canada.

All travellers are advised to monitor themselves for [symptoms](#) and to contact the local public health authority in their province or territory if they feel sick.

Call ahead if you suspect you have been exposed to COVID-19 abroad. Inform your health care provider or local health authority about symptoms and travel history.

[Source: Health Canada](#)

## **Q. Should I wear a mask to protect myself against the novel coronavirus?**

If you are a healthy individual, the use of a mask is not recommended for preventing the spread of COVID-19. Wearing a mask when you are not ill may give a false sense of security. There is a potential risk of infection with improper mask use and disposal. They also need to be changed frequently.

However, your health care provider may recommend you wear a mask if you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 while you are seeking or waiting for care. In this instance, masks are an appropriate part of infection prevention and control measures. The mask acts as a barrier and helps stop the tiny droplets from spreading you when you cough or sneeze.

[Source: Health Canada](#)

## **Q. Is there a vaccine for the 2019 novel coronavirus?**

Not at this time. There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs. Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- sneeze and cough into your sleeve

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- avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- avoid contact with people who are sick
- stay home if you are sick

## **Q. What is Durham Public Health doing in response to this situation?**

The Health Department is working closely with local, provincial and federal health partners to manage and monitor the situation. Cases and suspected of COVID-19 are now reportable to local health authorities under the provincial Health Protection and Promotion Act.

## **Q. What is the overall risk for getting COVID-19 while in Canada?**

Currently, the virus is not circulating locally and health officials have advised the *risk to Ontarians is still considered low*. The Public Health Agency of Canada is continuing to collaborate with partners internationally as well as to share information and work with federal, provincial and territorial partners and public health authorities and to maintain Canada's preparedness to rapidly identify, treat and prevent the spread of this emerging disease.

## **Q. What can I do to protect myself while handling library materials and collecting cash?**

There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs. Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- sneeze and cough into your sleeve
- avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- avoid contact with people who are sick
- stay home if you are sick

## **Q. When does the Town (and therefore the library) activate a pandemic plan?**

The Town is monitoring this situation closely. It follows recommendations provided by the Durham Region Health Department and will continue to adjust operations according to the recommendations of health authorities.

## **Q. Are there any confirmed cases in Whitby?**

No. While the Durham Region Health Department has reported that there are currently two confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the Durham Region (in Ajax), health care

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officials from Durham, Ontario and Canada advise that the risk posed by the virus here in Durham and Canada remains low.

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## Employment Related Questions:

### **Q. Can my supervisor send me home if I come to work with COVID-19 like symptoms?**

Yes. It is important for the Town to provide a healthy and safe workplace for all staff.

### **Q. When will I need to self-isolate/stay at home?**

- In consultation with your health care practitioner, you may need to stay home and self-isolate if:
- You have a lab-confirmed 2019 novel coronavirus infection, do not require hospitalization, and a medical practitioner has indicated that you can recover at home.
- You are being assessed for the 2019 novel coronavirus infection by a healthcare provider.
- You have traveled to a high risk country in the past 14 days. These currently include:
  - China
  - France
  - Germany
  - Hong Kong
  - Iran
  - Japan
  - Northern Italy
  - Singapore
  - South Korea
  - Spain
- You are a returning traveler from any of these countries and develop respiratory symptoms that include: fever, cough, difficulty breathing within 14 days of travel. Please promptly self-isolate and inform your healthcare provider, or your local public health department.

### **Q. What should I do if I have been in contact with someone that has been confirmed to have contracted COVID-19?**

In the event you come into contact with an individual with a confirmed case of COVID-19, notify public health authorities in your area immediately to receive guidance. Contact your supervisor / manager to inform them of the situation. In consultation with your manager and human resources, where possible, work from home arrangements will be undertaken. If working from home isn't an option, your supervisor / manager will explore the possibility of using other paid days, such as vacation, banked overtime, or personal sick time.

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## **Q. What are the reporting practices for absences?**

Normal absence reporting procedures continue to apply.

## **Working with the Public Questions:**

You may get questions from patrons about actions we are taking. The questions and answers below are to help you address questions you may receive from the public.

## **Q. What can I do to keep my family healthy? Have you got enough hand sanitizer?**

The health and safety of our staff and patrons are our top priority. We have a protocol of frequent and thorough cleaning at all our facilities and have invested in additional supplies, including soap, hand sanitizer, and disinfecting wipes for equipment. Every public counter has hand sanitizer available for patrons to use.

There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs. Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- sneeze and cough into your sleeve
- avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- avoid contact with people who are sick
- stay home if you are sick

## **Q. Are you going to cancel programs or events?**

At this time programs continue to operate. The Town and library follow recommendations provided by Durham Region Public Health and will continue to adjust our operations according to the recommendations of health authorities.

## **Q. Are you going to screen participants like they do at the doctor's office?**

We are following all guidelines provided by the Durham Region Health Department and will continue to adjust our operations according to the recommendations of health authorities as the situation develops. There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs. We encourage everyone to take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- sneeze and cough into your sleeve
- avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- avoid contact with people who are sick

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- stay home if you are sick

## **Q. What are you doing to prevent the spread of illness at your programs?**

We have a protocol of frequent and thorough cleaning at all our facilities. There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs. We encourage everyone to take these everyday steps:

- wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- sneeze and cough into your sleeve
- avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- avoid contact with people who are sick
- stay home if you are sick

## **Q. How often are you cleaning the equipment?**

We have a protocol of frequent and thorough cleaning at all our facilities and have invested in additional supplies. In addition, disinfecting wipes are available to customers to wipe down keyboards or touch screens.

## **Q. Someone was coughing in my program, what are you going to do to make them leave?**

It's important we all do our part to stay healthy. That's why the library follows recommendations provided by the Durham Region Health Department. Currently, the health department recommends taking the following steps to help prevent the spread of germs:

- wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- sneeze and cough into your sleeve
- avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- avoid contact with people who are sick
- stay home if you are sick

## **Q. Will you give everyone their own sanitizer?**

We have invested in additional supplies and there are hand-sanitizing stations available for individual use throughout the Library's facilities.

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## **Q. What do I do if I think someone in my program is sick?**

As always, participants are requested to stay home if they are feeling unwell or have a fever. A reminder that the health department recommends taking the following steps to help prevent the spread of germs:

- wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- sneeze and cough into your sleeve
- avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- avoid contact with people who are sick
- stay home if you are sick

## **Q. What do I do if I think someone is sick?**

As always, participants are requested to stay home if they are feeling unwell or have a fever. A reminder that the health department recommends taking the following steps to help prevent the spread of germs:

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- sneeze and cough into your sleeve
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- avoid contact with people who are sick
- stay home if you are sick