

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses, some causing illness in people, and others that circulate among animals, including camels, cats, and bats. Rarely animal coronaviruses can evolve and infect people and then spread between people.

Human coronaviruses are common throughout the world and commonly cause mild to moderate illness in people worldwide. However, the emergence of novel (new) coronaviruses, such as SARS and MERS, have been associated with more severe respiratory illness.

Symptoms

Common human coronaviruses usually cause mild to moderate upper-respiratory tract illnesses, like the common cold. These illnesses usually only last for a short amount of time. Symptoms may include

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

Human coronaviruses can sometimes cause lower-respiratory tract illnesses, such as pneumonia or bronchitis.

Transmission

Human coronaviruses most commonly spread from an infected person to others through

- the air by coughing and sneezing
- close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
- touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes before washing your hands
- rarely, fecal contamination

Prevention

The following can help prevent the spread of coronaviruses and protect yourself from becoming infected.

- wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands
- avoid close contact with people who are sick

There are currently no vaccines to protect against human coronavirus infection

Treatment

There are no specific treatments. To help relieve symptoms

- take pain and fever medications
- drink plenty of liquids
- stay home and rest