



COVID-19 TRANSMISSION: PATIENT-FACING INFORMATION

COVID-19 is an illness caused by SARS-CoV-2, a respiratory virus that spreads easily from person to person.

SARS-CoV-2 spreads mainly through respiratory droplets exhaled by an infected person when they cough, sneeze, breath, sing or talk. These droplets can cause infection when another person's nose, mouth or eyes are exposed, which is most likely to occur when someone is close contact (within six feet) to the infected person.

SARS-CoV-2 spread is possible through surfaces contaminated with infected respiratory droplets, but this is less common. It is possible that a person could get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose or eyes before washing their hands.

SARS-CoV-2 can also be spread through airborne transmission, this method of transmission is also uncommon, but has occurred in enclosed, indoor spaces with poor ventilation and lengthy exposure to respiratory particles.¹ Airborne transmission means that droplets can remain suspended in the air over a period of time.

When assessing your risk of becoming infected with COVID-19, consider the following factors:

- **Distance:** SARS-CoV-2 is transmitted more easily when you are in close contact with an infected individual. Close contact is usually defined as within six feet but can be extended depending on the activity in question.
- **Duration:** The longer you are in contact with an individual who is infected, the more likely you are to become infected yourself, as the longer you engage the more viral load you are exposed to. Fifteen minutes of exposure to the same individual within a 24-hour period is all it takes to become infected with COVID-19
- **Setting:** Smaller, enclosed spaces with poor ventilation significantly increase your risk of exposure, as respiratory droplets potentially containing SARS-CoV-2 virus are more concentrated in these settings
- **Masking:** Settings in which all individuals are not masked for any period of time increases your risk of becoming infected with COVID-19.

The above factors make certain activities and settings, such as dinner parties at home, indoor dining in restaurants, working out in indoor gyms, going to the movies, significantly more risky.

You can help limit your risk of becoming infected with COVID-19 by:

- Wearing an appropriate face mask at all times when around others
- Limiting the duration of contact with others
- Moving any gathering or activity outdoors

1. Ventilation means the introduction of outside air into a space, not the recirculation of the same air in an enclosed space. Ventilation can be achieved by actions such as opening doors and windows.