

COVID-19 and Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C

What is COVID-19?

Coronaviruses have existed as a family of viruses that can make humans and animals sick. COVID-19 is caused by a new strain of coronavirus that was first reported in December 2019.

How do you get COVID-19?

The virus can be spread through person-to-person contact:

- close contact with someone who has the virus
- contact with droplets from an infected person's cough or sneeze
- touching objects or surfaces that have cough or sneeze droplets from an infected person and then touching your face

Protecting against COVID-19

The best way to protect against Covid-19 is to practice good sanitation. Such practices include:

- Washing your hands often and thoroughly with soap and water
- Use hand sanitizer where hand washing is not available
- Covering your mouth with your elbow or a tissue if you cough or sneeze - throw the tissue away and wash your hands immediately
- Avoiding touching your face
- Avoiding close contact with people who have a fever or cough

Symptoms of COVID-19

The symptoms vary from person to person. Many people experience mild symptoms but some people experience more severe symptoms which could include severe pneumonia and could lead to death in some populations. People with already existing chronic conditions are most at risk of developing severe symptoms. The most common symptoms include:

- fever
- cough
- shortness of breath

What should you do if you become unwell?

If you start experiencing symptoms and/or have been in contact with a person that has tested positive, the recommendation is to self-quarantine yourself and monitor your symptoms using flu medications and home remedies. You should call your primary care provider if you have one to get guidance on next steps if necessary. You can also call 211 for guidance.

What are the risks of coronavirus COVID-19 for people living with hepatitis B or hepatitis C?

Some groups are prone to experiencing severe symptoms of COVID-19. Such groups include:

- people with weakened immune systems (e.g. people on immune suppressing medications, people receiving cancer treatments)
- Elderly people
- People with chronic medical conditions.

This means that individuals that are living with hepatitis B and hepatitis C could be at great risk of complications that may arise as a result of COVID-19 infection. This risk is increased for those who have had hepatitis B or C for a while and developed advanced liver diseases or cirrhosis. This group also includes people who have recovered from hepatitis C but have other health conditions as a result.

What can you do to protect yourself if you have hepatitis B or hepatitis C?

If you have had hepatitis C previously or currently have hepatitis B or C, you need to take special precautions to prevent against COVID-19. Such measures include: going to frequent liver checks, getting vaccinated for influenza and pneumococcal disease. Having adequate stock of medications is important to prevent frequent trip to the doctor's or pharmacies if you are on medication for hepatitis C or B.

What should you do if you care for someone who has a chronic health condition or compromised immune system?

If caring for someone with a chronic health condition or compromised immune system, you need to take special precautions such as:

- Practicing regular and efficient hand washing techniques
- Practice basic infection protocols
- If you feel unwell in any way, avoid any form of contact with the person
- Providing support to such people such as helping them with shopping or tasks that might need them to go out
- Make sure that you and the person that you care for have a plan in place in the event that they become unwell.

Where can you get more information about COVID-19?

You can get additional information about the coronavirus on the Oklahoma State Department of Health website:

<https://coronavirus.health.ok.gov/>