

# COVID-19



“Attitude is huge and knowledge is power. Right now, it’s good to educate yourself, but you want to find the right resources and avoid stories that feed into the panic. The more informed you are, the more you’ll feel in control of what’s happening.”

**Kristin**  
**Diagnosed with leukemia**

## What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a new coronavirus that was first detected in 2019. Coronaviruses are a type of virus that also causes the common cold, bronchitis and pneumonia. The COVID-19 virus mainly affects the respiratory system—nose, throat, and lungs. Experts are actively studying this virus to find treatments and a vaccine to prevent infection. This factsheet covers what we know now. Your healthcare team will give you more information as more is learned.

- **How does it affect me?** Some people who get COVID-19 have symptoms that are mild and last a couple of days. They might not even realize they have COVID-19. Others have symptoms that last a couple of weeks or more and can be serious.

People who have cancer and are receiving cancer treatments may have more serious symptoms because their immune system is weaker. Your immune system is your body’s way of protecting you from viruses. When your immune system can’t fight viruses well, it is important to protect yourself by staying away from people who may have this virus.



### **How could I get sick with COVID-19?**

The virus that causes COVID-19 spreads mainly from person to person. The virus can get into your eyes, ears or mouth in these ways:

- Droplets from when an infected person coughs or sneezes or talks near you
- You have close contact with infected people touching or shaking hands
- You touch surfaces that are contaminated with the virus – touching the surfaces then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes.

### **How can I avoid getting sick with COVID-19?**

To help you not get COVID-19 you can self-isolate, meaning you stay at home without visitors. You could have your food and medicines delivered to you. But self-isolation is not always practical so you can also apply the following strategies to help you avoid the virus:

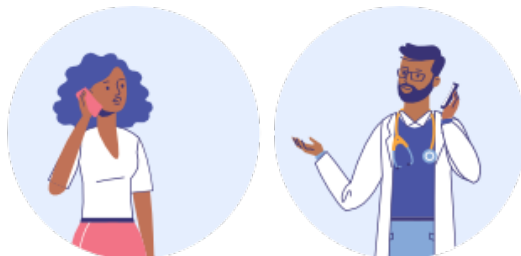
- Practice physical distancing—stay 2m or 6ft away from people who don't live with you.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds—about the time it takes to sing “Happy Birthday” twice. Use alcohol wipes if you do not have soap and water. Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- Clean surfaces that you touch often like doors, handles, light switches, phones.
- Limit your trips outside to help stay away from possible contact with the virus. If you must go out, avoid crowds.
- As an added precaution to these other measures, wear a cloth face mask or face covering if you go out in public. Physical distancing can be hard to do in some spaces. Wearing a mask can help slow the spread of the virus, especially from those who don't know they have it.
- Stay away from people who are sick.



## What are the signs of COVID-19?

The symptoms of COVID-19 are not the same for everyone. Some people with COVID-19 have mild symptoms, like a cold or flu. Some have more serious symptoms like pneumonia. Some people have no symptoms at all—they are called asymptomatic. Typical symptoms of COVID-19 may include some—but not all—of the following:

- Cough
- Runny nose
- Tiredness
- Sore throat
- Loss of taste or smell



## I suspect I have COVID-19. What should I do?

You should stay at home if you have mild, flu-like symptoms. You may get better on your own without any special treatment or needing to go to the hospital. While home, you should do the following:

- Call to get more information from your doctor, nurse, or pivot nurse. If not available, call Info 811 or the COVID-19 hotline (see section [Contact information](#)).
- Keep a symptom diary. Write down your temperature every day so you can share it with your healthcare team

- Rest
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Continue to take your medications
- Limit contact with other people to protect those around you
- Wash your hands often



**Contact someone in your healthcare team immediately, or go to the Emergency room or call 911 if:**

- You have trouble breathing that does not go away
- You have constant chest pain (pain that does not go away) or heaviness in the chest
- You have a fever of 38 degrees or more
- You have confusion
- You have difficulty waking up
- You have symptoms that are getting worse

### **How does COVID-19 affect my treatment?**

To keep you and other patients safe, your care might be different at this time. For example, instead of coming to the hospital or clinic, your appointment might be over the phone or video if possible (telemedicine). This will keep you from being exposed to the virus.

**If you are already in treatment and have an appointment:**

- Your healthcare team will contact you over the phone 1-2 days before your appointment.
- In between appointments, keep a list of questions to ask your oncologist (or radiation oncologist) at your next appointment (in person or telehealth). Being prepared will help you not overlook a question or concern you may have.

**If this is your first appointment, a regular follow-up or a question that is not urgent:**

- Your healthcare team will contact you over the phone.
- Prepare for your appointment by keeping a list of questions you may have for the doctor. If you have any questions, ask them.

**Contact information**

If you have questions about cancer and COVID-19, you can call:

- Your healthcare team
- 811 -Info-Santé – for non urgent questions
- 514 644-4545 – the COVID-19 hotline (Montréal)
- 1 877 644-4545 – the COVID-19 hotline (toll free)
- 1 800 361-9596 – the ATS COVID-19 hotline (toll free for hearing impaired)
- 211 for Greater Montreal community and social services

## Resources

For more information on COVID-19 check out the resources below.

[Canadian Cancer Society – Cancer and COVID-19 \(novel coronavirus\)](#)

[University Health Network – What Patients with Cancer Need to Know About COVID 19](#)

[Rossy Cancer Network – COVID Oncology](#)

[CHU St. Justine – COVID-19 Answers to your questions](#)

[CHUM – COVID-19 – Information pour tous](#)

[Direction des communications ministère de la Santé et des Services Sociaux – COVID-19 Self Care Guide](#)

[CIUSS de l'Est-de l'île-de-Montréal – COVID-19](#)

[CIUSSS de Laval – Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\)](#)

[Gouvernement du Québec – Coronavirus disease in Québec](#)

[Gouvernement du Québec – Wearing a mask or a face covering in public settings in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

## Acknowledgement of sources

The content of this document has been adapted from the following sources:

- Canadian Cancer Society. Cancer and COVID-19 (novel coronavirus). 2020.
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- Rossy Cancer Network. COVID Oncology. 2020.
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- CIUSSS de Laval. To avoid catching or transmitting COVID-19. 2020.
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- Coronaviruses and Acute Respiratory Syndromes (COVID-19, MERS, and SARS). 2020.
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- CDC's Response to COVID-19. 2020.
- Government of Canada. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Prevention and risks. 2020.

### **Healthcare professional endorsement**

The content of this document has been reviewed and approved by a team of healthcare professionals and clinical experts.

### **Disclaimer**

Please note that this fact sheet is not intended as a substitute for consultation with a healthcare professional. If you have questions about your health, or any medical issue, you should contact a healthcare professional right away. You should not delay seeking medical advice, or disregard professional medical advice, because of information in this fact sheet. Before beginning any health treatment, always consult your doctor. All care has been taken to ensure that the information contained in this document is accurate at the time of publication. e-IMPAQc is not responsible for any injury or damage to persons or property arising out of, or related to, any use of the fact sheet, or because of any errors or omissions.

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**Last updated:** November 1, 2021