What to Know About Coronavirus

A coronavirus is a type of disease that can cause an infection in your respiratory tract (your sinuses, nose, throat and lungs) and can spread from person to person, especially when people cough or sneeze.

The current outbreak of coronavirus, which is also called COVID-19, 2019-nCov, Coronavirus Disease 2019 and SARS-CoV-2, was first detected in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. It has since spread to multiple countries including the United States.

Coronavirus symptoms include fever, cough and shortness of breath. In milder cases, it can present like a common cold. So far, serious coronavirus cases in children have been very rare. The overwhelming majority of confirmed cases have been adults over 60 with additional underlying medical conditions. Most children who were infected only experienced mild symptoms, similar to a common cold. We don’t have a good understanding at this point as to why the elderly seem more impacted by this virus than our younger patients.

We have very little scientific evidence concerning the possible role of immunosuppression in either susceptibility to the infection, or ability to manage it. Almost all the data we have so far is from China, where children under 16 represented less than 1% of those infected.

The way that coronavirus spreads is very similar to colds and flus, so the best tips to prevent coronavirus are the same ones you use during flu season, and to exercise caution and common sense:

- Do not travel or expose yourselves or your children to large crowds if not absolutely necessary.
- Wash your hands frequently and for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, or an alcohol based sanitizer which is at least 70% alcohol.
- Do not touch your face (easier said than done).
- If your child develops a fever and cough and is receiving an immunosuppressant medication, please let the physician or provider who is prescribing that medication know immediately.
- If you or your child needs to self-quarantine, please let your healthcare provider know so we can check on you. Moreover, if your child receives medication infusions, your prescribing physician or provider is currently developing strategies to consider whether a brief break might be needed.

We are here to help. Do not hesitate to call your healthcare provider with questions or concerns.

Connecticut Children’s is working closely with the CDC, the nation’s leading public health institute. We recommend their website for the latest news and advice from public health experts: cdc.gov/coronavirus. For the latest information about Connecticut, visit ct.gov/coronavirus.