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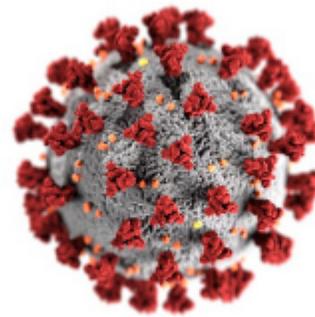
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## Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)

### What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a disease caused by the coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, that has not previously been identified in humans. This virus is not the same coronavirus that can cause the common cold in humans, nor is it the same as canine coronavirus (CCoV).

Coronaviruses are a family of viruses characterized by crown-like spikes on their surface as seen under the microscope. There are many viruses in this family that cause various types of diseases, such as diarrhea and upper respiratory infections.



### How is it transmitted?

Current evidence suggests that person-to-person spread is the main source of infection. This occurs through respiratory droplets created when an infected person sneezes, coughs, talks, sings, or yells. There is also a possibility of spread via objects or surfaces that have been exposed to the virus; however, this is not suspected as a main source of infection.

### Have any animals tested positive for the virus that causes COVID-19?

As of September 2020, there have been several cases of animals testing positive for the COVID-19 virus.

Dogs have tested positive for the virus; these cases are uncommon and appear to occur after exposure to infected human family members. While a few dogs have shown concurrent illness possibly due to the COVID-19 virus, most of the infected dogs did not show physical signs of illness.

Domesticated cats have also tested positive for the virus. Some of the cats became ill with respiratory and breathing problems, and one cat also exhibited vomiting and diarrhea. Almost all the positive cats had known exposure to humans with COVID-19.

Large cats, particularly tigers and lions, have also been affected by the virus. An outbreak at the Bronx Zoo in New York State, likely due to an infected zookeeper, resulted in 4 tigers and 3 lions with coughs and respiratory problems.

Mink have also been affected by COVID-19. Many farms in the Netherlands, a few farms in Denmark, and one in Spain have had outbreaks, with mink becoming ill and having breathing problems. Mink appear to be particularly susceptible to this new coronavirus.

While no pet ferrets or Syrian hamsters have been affected so far, an experimental study showed that both species are susceptible to this virus and can develop respiratory illness.

At this time (September 2020), no other domesticated animals have been diagnosed with this virus. **However, interaction with any species should be avoided if you are ill or suspect you are ill with COVID-19.**

### **What does this all mean? Can pets be infected with COVID-19?**

Current evidence (as of September 2020) indicates that certain animals can be infected by the COVID-19 virus, but it **appears to be an infrequent occurrence**. In total, across the globe, few dogs and cats have tested positive in comparison to humans. Keep in mind that to date, there are millions of human cases of COVID-19 worldwide and fewer than 50 cats and dogs have tested positive, many of which have not exhibited signs or become ill.

### **Can other animals infected with SARS-CoV-2 (the COVID-19 virus) spread the infection to humans or other animals?**

There was evidence of at least two humans becoming infected after exposure to infected mink at farms in the Netherlands. It is suspected that a human initially infected the mink at the farm, and then the infection spread back to other humans from these infected minks. There is also evidence that cats have become infected after exposure to infected mink at farms.

Currently, this is the **only reported incidence of animal to human transmission of SARS-CoV-2**. The most common mode of transmission, by far, is human to human spread. There is evidence that cats, ferrets, and Syrian hamsters can spread the virus to other animals within their species, but there is **no evidence that they can spread the virus to humans**.

### **Should I monitor my pet for any signs?**

Although it is uncommon for pets to become ill with COVID-19, there is still much to learn about this new virus, and vigilance is key. If your pet exhibits signs of illness (coughing, sneezing, fever, abnormally low energy, etc.), particularly if your pet has been exposed to someone known to be infected with COVID-19, call your veterinarian for guidance and to arrange for testing, treatment, etc. Special protocols are in place at veterinary clinics, including physical distancing to protect everyone from spread of the disease.



## If I get sick, is it safe for me to care for my pets?

If you have been diagnosed with COVID-19, public health officials recommend that you **restrict contact with pets and other animals as a precaution** until more information is known about the virus. Keep your cat indoors if possible, to prevent them from interacting with other animals or people. If possible, have another member of your household care for your pet while you are sick. Walk dogs on a leash, maintaining at least 6 feet (2 meters) from other people and animals, and avoid dog parks or trails.

If you must provide care for your pet yourself, follow the recommendations published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds before and after any interaction with your pets; after coughing, sneezing, blowing your nose, or touching your face.
- avoid close contact with your pet (snuggling, kissing, or sleeping with your pet) and do not share food or sleep with your pet in your bed.
- wear a mask—even a cloth mask—to help decrease droplet spread.
- clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.

If you are sick with COVID-19 and your pet becomes ill, do not take your pet to your veterinary clinic yourself. Call your veterinarian and let them know you are sick with COVID-19. Some clinics are offering telemedicine or have other contingency plans in place for seeing sick pets from COVID-19 positive households (see handouts "Telehealth and What it Means", "Telemedicine and How it Works", and "Preparing for Your Telemedicine Appointment" for more information). Also, see handout "Caring for Your Pets if You Have COVID-19" for more information.

Based on recommendations from the CDC, if you are not ill with COVID-19, you should follow these basic guidelines:

- treat your pets the same as is recommended for humans: do not allow your pets to interact with animals or people outside the household.
- keep cats indoors when possible.
- walk dogs on a leash, maintaining at least 6 feet (2 meters) from other people and animals.
- avoid gathering at parks or other public places with other people and pets.
- adhere to local regulations regarding park and trail closures.

## Can I get COVID-19 from my pet?

As the number of reports of animals becoming infected by COVID-19 increase, concern about getting COVID-19 from them also rises. While human to pet cases have occurred, it appears to be uncommon. There are no reports of household pets transmitting COVID-19 to people. While scientists are still learning about this virus, they do know that the most common mode of transmission, by far, is human to human spread.

## Should my pet wear a face mask as a precaution?

No. First, it is unlikely that this will protect your pet from any potential disease transmission. Second, it can cause breathing difficulties, especially in certain breeds of cats and dogs. Third, surgical masks must be saved for use in people with active signs of infection and medical professionals.

## Is there a vaccine?

Currently, a vaccine for this new SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus is not available. There is a vaccine for the canine coronavirus (CCoV), however, this vaccine **does not work** to protect you or your pet from the virus that causes COVID-19.

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