What should I do if I think I (or someone in my family) has COVID-19 symptoms?

› If you have mild symptoms (fever, cough or difficulty breathing), call your physician, other healthcare providers or the Florida Department of Health hotline as soon as possible.

› If you have severe symptoms, or you have underlying conditions, such as a weakened immune system or chronic respiratory disease, call your physician or Emergency Department for guidance on how to seek care without exposing others.

› Call ahead before you visit any care center and let them know that you think you may have COVID-19.

› Stay home when possible; separate yourself from other people and animals at home. The CDC still recommends people with COVID-19 limit contact with animals until more information is known about the virus.

› Be vigilant about practicing virus prevention, including proper hand hygiene and covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.

Handwashing 101

Use these easy steps to teach kids good hand hygiene & to ensure your own handwashing is effective.

› Wet hands.
› Add soap.
› Rub hands together for about 20 seconds. Instead of counting to 20 while scrubbing your hands, try singing the “Happy Birthday to You” song twice. (This is really handy for kids who cannot yet count to 20.)
› Scrub your palms, fingertips, in between fingers and the backs of your hands well. Wash all the way up to your wrists.
› Rinse your hands until all of the bubbles are gone.
› Dry your hands with a paper towel. Use the paper towel to turn the sink faucet off, and then throw the paper towel away.

For more information, contact the Florida Department of Health hotline at 866.779.6121.
The Basics
What is COVID-19? Is it the same thing as “coronavirus”? 
Coronaviruses are a group of viruses that have a halo or crown-like (corona) appearance when viewed under a microscope. These viruses are a common cause of mild to moderate upper respiratory illness in humans and are associated with various diseases in animals.

COVID-19, initially referred to as “novel coronavirus,” is a condition caused by a type of coronavirus that was previously unrecognized but has now been named COVID-19. It can cause mild to severe respiratory symptoms; see below for more on symptoms. We also recommend visiting the CDC and the World Health Organization online for more information about COVID-19 symptoms.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19? 
Patients with confirmed COVID-19 have reportedly had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of fever, cough and shortness of breath. Symptoms may appear two to 14 days after exposure, but it’s important to remember that very few respiratory infections will be COVID-19.

Should I wear a surgical mask or respirator in public? 
The CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19. Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease, according to the CDC.

I might have been exposed. What should I do? 
If you have had close contact (within 6 ft.) with someone confirmed to have COVID-19 and have symptoms (fever, cough or difficulty breathing), call your doctor right away. If you do not have a care provider, call the Florida Department of Health’s hotline for guidance.

The CDC advises people who have no symptoms but believe they may have been exposed to COVID-19 to stay home and self-monitor for symptoms for 14 days after their last potential exposure.

Who should be tested for COVID-19? 
The CDC sets specific criteria for COVID-19 diagnostic testing, and that has been evolving. Healthcare providers will work with the Florida Department of Health and CDC to determine whether there is a need for a patient to be tested for COVID-19. Testing is not currently recommended for those who do not have symptoms.

Prevention Steps
How can I protect myself and others from COVID-19 infection? 
The best way to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 is to stay informed and to use the same common-sense precautions you take to guard against other illnesses, such as the flu.

› Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contain at least 60% alcohol and rub hands until they feel dry, when handwashing isn’t an option.
› Cough or sneeze into your sleeve (the crook of your elbow), shirt or a tissue, not into your hands, and encourage kids to do the same.
› Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth, and encourage those around you to cover their nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing.
› Stay home if you’re sick and do not return to work, school or social activities until you have been fever-free for at least 48 hours without medication.
› Clean commonly touched surfaces in your home and workplace with bleach, ammonia or alcohol-based disinfectants. Wipe down and disinfect things like doorknobs, light switches, refrigerator handle(s), TV or stereo remote controls, computer keyboards, your home telephone, cellphones and other touchscreen devices, etc.
› If you develop a fever, cough or difficulty breathing, call your healthcare provider for instructions on how to seek care without exposing others.

While there are no EPA-registered disinfectants specifically listed as having the ability to kill COVID-19, related viruses with similar physical and biochemical properties can be killed with bleach, ammonia or alcohol, or cleaning agents containing any of these disinfectants.

How does COVID-19 spread? 
Current understanding about how COVID-19 spreads is largely based on what is known about similar coronaviruses. COVID-19 is a new disease, and there is more to learn about how it spreads, the severity of illness it causes and to what extent it may spread in the United States.

Person-to-person spread: The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person, between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) and through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or Sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

Spread from contact with infected surfaces or objects: 
It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose or eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest). Some spread might be possible before people show symptoms, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

There is likely very low risk of spread from products or packaging, because of poor survivability of other coronaviruses on surfaces. Currently there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 associated with imported goods, but there is still a lot that is unknown about how the newly emerged COVID-19 spreads.

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