**Greenwood Leflore Hospital**
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# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT COVID-19

## What is exposure to COVID-19?

According to CDC guidelines, exposure is being within 6 feet of an infected individual for more than 15 minutes without that person wearing appropriate facial covering. The likelihood increases the longer you were in close contact. You are putting yourself slightly at risk just by being in a room with somebody who is infected. Areas of concern include being in a car with an unmasked infected person for a prolonged period of time, or living or working very closely in a small room or environment.

## What should I do if I find out I may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19?

The first thing to do is immediately quarantine yourself, which means stay at home and away from other individuals, not out in the general public. If you have to be out for an emergency or to get supplies, then make sure you are wearing a facial covering and keep your hands from touching things that other individuals might also touch. Stay in quarantine for 14 days from the time of exposure to the infected person. If you start to have symptoms of COVID-19, seek medical care to see if you have been infected.

## What are the signs and symptoms of COVID-19?

While an individual's signs and symptoms vary, they are the same that you experience with almost any virus, like the flu, a cold or a stomach virus. All of these symptoms are the same with COVID-19 because they are all viruses; however, COVID-19 has the potential to be a much more serious infection. Symptoms include cough, runny nose, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain, headache, fatigue and muscle aches. These are all common symptoms when you have any type of virus. With COVID-19 there are a few symptoms that stand out, such as loss of taste and loss of smell. If you have these symptoms, it would be more likely that the virus is COVID-19. Symptoms that are very concerning are worsening of cough or severe shortness of breath when walking short distances such as across a room. These symptoms would be outside the normal range of other viruses and certainly would be reason to seek medical attention to see if you have a significant co-infection with COVID-19.

## If I get tested for COVID-19, what do the results mean and how am I supposed to respond?

There are a lot of different types of testing, just like for other types of infections. Sometimes this causes a bit of confusion. Some smaller outpatient or quick care clinics, as well as smaller hospitals have been performing a very rapid test that people seek out because they can get their answer within an hour. These tests are just looking for a footprint of the virus and not the genetic material of the virus. While this type of test is quick, it is just considered a screening test and not a definitive test. At Greenwood Leflore Hospital we are using a test that takes longer to come back, sometimes up to two weeks, but it is looking for the true genetic material similar to the DNA at a crime scene that proves you indeed have the virus. A test that comes back negative means that on the day you were tested that you do not have the virus based on findings at the moment. The best time to get tested is when you are symptomatic. Because you have more virus in your body, it is more likely to be picked up during testing. If you have to be tested for your job but you are not symptomatic, it would be best to wait 3-5 days after the time of exposure.

## If I have no symptoms and am not sure if I have been exposed, should I be tested?

While there are a lot of opinions regarding testing in this situation, testing everyone is impractical and not a good use of resources. If you have no symptoms, but have possibly been exposed, the best practice is to quarantine yourself for 14 days and be tested after onset of symptoms. An exception is if you plan to be around someone who is in a high risk group, such as an elderly person to which COVID-19 could be life threatening, or if you yourself are in a high risk group. In this case you would want to go ahead and get tested.

## What can I do to protect the people that I love from becoming infected even if I have no symptoms?

Although you may not show symptoms, it is important to keep others safe; otherwise, you may unknowingly infect others. Practice good hand washing for 20 seconds. Wear a mask when around others so that particles from your nose and mouth do not get onto somebody else when you talk, sneeze or cough. Maintain 6 feet social distancing and avoid large gatherings. Remember that when wearing a normal everyday mask you are not protected from getting the virus from other individuals. You are protecting other individuals from you.

## Are there really more cases today of COVID-19, or are we just finding them because we are testing more?

There are new cases everyday and the numbers of cases are rising. Early on we had very limited testing, so we only tested those who were very high risk of having bad outcomes from the virus. The mortality rate appeared high because of the number of tests done versus the number of people who died from the virus. Now we are testing more people from the general population who are not at high risk.

**Medical Staff of Greenwood Leflore Hospital**