

FAQs Covid-19

1. What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus. This new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. COVID-19 is now a pandemic affecting many countries worldwide.

2. What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

- The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, dry cough, and tiredness.
- Other symptoms that are less common and may affect some patients include body aches and pains, nasal congestion, headache, conjunctivitis, sore throat, diarrhoea, loss of taste or smell or a rash on skin or discoloration of fingers or toes.
- These symptoms are usually mild and begin gradually.
- Some people become infected but only have very mild symptoms.
- Serious Symptoms are: difficulty in breathing/shortness of breath, chest pain or loss of speech or movement
- Urgent medical attention should be sought in case of serious symptoms.

3. What should I do if I have COVID-19 symptoms and when should I seek medical care?

- Get yourself tested for Covid-19 free of cost at the nearest Govt. hospital/ facility
- If test is positive and you have minor symptoms, such as a slight cough or a mild fever you should stay at home, self-isolate and monitor your symptoms/ temperature and oxygen saturation.
- Take advice of the doctor by calling 104
- Seek immediate medical care if you have difficulty in breathing or pain/pressure in the chest. Call 104 so you can be directed to the right health facility.

4. How does COVID-19 spread?

It spreads from an infected person during speaking, coughing or sneezing. The droplets from cough or sneeze infect others in close vicinity (less than two metre) directly or through touch of surfaces or articles where droplets have fallen.

5. How can we protect others and ourselves if we don't know who is infected?

Hand and Respiratory hygiene are important and these are the best ways of protection.

1. Wear a mask
2. Wash hands frequently
3. Maintain social distancing
4. Avoid social gathering
5. Sit in properly ventilated room

6. Is it true that only people with symptoms of COVID-19 can spread the disease?

No. The virus spreads most easily when an infected person has symptoms. But the virus can also spread before the symptoms start. It can take 2–14 days after someone is exposed to the virus for symptoms to show up. Infected people start infecting others 2 days before onset of

symptoms. They are likely to be non-infective after 10 days of onset of symptoms when symptoms have ceased.

7. What should I do if I have come in close contact with someone who has COVID-19?

If you have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19, you can get infected. Close contact means that you live with or have been in settings of less than 2 metre from those who have the disease. In these cases, it is best to stay at home

- If you become ill, even with very mild symptoms you must self-isolate
- Get yourself tested for COVID-19 if you get symptoms or within 5-10 days of exposure even if you don't develop symptoms
- Even if you don't think you have been exposed to COVID-19 but develop symptoms, then self-isolate and monitor yourself and get test done
- You are more likely to infect others in the early stages of the disease when you just have mild symptoms, therefore early self-isolation is very important.
- If you do not have symptoms, but have been exposed to an infected person, self-quarantine for 14 days.

8. What is the meaning of self-isolation?

Self-isolation is when a person who is experiencing fever, cough or other COVID-19 symptoms stays at home and does not go to work, school or public places.

- Self-isolate in a well-ventilated room with attached hand-hygiene and toilet facilities
- Keep a distance of at least 2 metre from others, even from your family members
- Monitor your symptoms, temperature and oxygen saturation at least twice a day
- If you develop difficulty in breathing, contact your healthcare provider immediately – call on 104
- Stay positive and energized by keeping in touch with loved ones by phone or online and by exercising yourself at home.

9. What is the difference between self-isolation, self-quarantine and social distancing?

- Quarantine is for persons not tested positive for COVID-19 and also for those who may have been exposed to COVID-19 but are not ill. The goal is to prevent spread of the disease at the time when people just develop symptoms.
- Isolation means separating people who are tested positive. Positive person may or may not be having the symptoms of COVID-19. Isolation is done to prevent the spread of the disease.
- Social distancing means being physically apart. It is recommended to keep at least 2-metre distance from others.

10. Are there any medicines or therapies that can prevent or cure COVID-19?

While some traditional or home remedies may provide comfort and alleviate symptoms of COVID-19, there is no evidence that current medicine can prevent or cure the disease. Self-medication with any medicines, including antibiotics, as a prevention or cure for COVID-19 is not recommended. Some drugs viz. Hydroxychloroquine/ antiviral drugs/ Steroids are given under medical supervision. Hydroxychloroquine is also advised for prophylaxis in frontline and health care workers.

11. Is there a vaccine, drug or treatment for COVID-19?

Not yet. To date, there is no vaccine and no specific antiviral medicine to prevent or treat COVID-2019. People with serious illness should be hospitalized. Most patients recover with supportive care.

The most effective ways to protect yourself and others against COVID-19 are to frequently clean your hands, cough/sneeze in the bend of elbow or tissue, wear mask and maintain a distance of at least 2 metre (6 feet) from other people. (minimum 1 meter)

12. Are antibiotics effective against COVID-19?

No. Antibiotics are effective against bacteria, but a SARS CoV-2 being a virus, is not affected by antibiotics. Hence avoid self-medication with antibiotics. Only take on the advice of a physician.

13. Can vitamin-C cure COVID-19?

Vitamin C is helpful in strengthening the immune system, but it is not a cure for COVID 19.

14. Will drinking of lots of hot drinks stop COVID-19?

There is no hot drink that will protect you from COVID-19 or cure the illness. So far there is no proven cure for COVID-19 but most people recover by themselves. Taking liquids can only help in managing your symptoms.

15. How and where can I get tested for Covid-19?

As per the latest guidelines of Government of Punjab, anyone can be tested for coronavirus without prescription of a doctor.

One can get tested for COVID-19 at Govt. labs free of cost. Walk in test corners have been established for collection of samples for Covid-19 at all Govt. Hospitals of the State.

16. My sample has been taken for Covid-19. How much time it will take to get my results and what precautions should I take till then?

RT-PCR method takes about 24 hours which is used for most cases and Truenat method takes about 1-2 hours which is used only in emergency cases.

Precautions:

- Stay in a well ventilated single room preferably with an attached/separate toilet.
- Needs to stay away from elderly people, children, pregnant ladies and persons with co-morbidities within the household.
- Restrict movement in the house.
- Should not attend any social/religious gatherings, for example, wedding and condolences etc.
- Frequently Wash hands with soap and water or with alcohol based sanitizer.
- Avoid sharing household items.
- Wear a mask all the time.
- Please follow instructions told to you by the health care provider.

17. What is Antigen test for Covid-19?

In an Antigen based test, nasal swab is taken and the result comes in 30 minutes. A positive result is considered a confirmed positive. However, if the antigen test report is negative it

cannot be concluded that you are indeed negative. So, if you are having symptoms, RT PCR test should be done for confirmation.

18. How will I know the result of my test for Covid-19?

The results of the sample will be sent to the mobile number given by you while giving sample.

19. Where can I get treatment of Covid-19, if I am asymptomatic?

For patients tested positive for COVID-19, Home isolation is allowed only to those persons who have a separate, well ventilated room with attached toilet and do not have any high-risk condition such as diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, etc. In case of high-risk conditions, patients can be allowed home isolation after consultation with treating physician.

Institutional isolation means admission to a COVID Care Health Centre which can be a Govt. or a Private facility.

Institutional isolation is required for those who do not have a separate room with attached washroom available at home or who require constant monitoring or have high risk conditions like diabetes, blood pressure, heart disease, etc.

20. What Investigations or tests are required if I am Covid-19 positive?

- i) No tests are required if you are asymptomatic and do not have any co-morbidities along with Covid-19
- ii) However, if you have co-morbidities and other diseases along with Covid-19, few blood tests, chest X ray or other investigations may be required and these will be decided by the treating physician.
- iii) If you are symptomatic or you have breathlessness or oxygen saturation is falling, you should be hospitalized immediately and investigations will be decided by the medical specialist as per the condition.

21. Whom I can contact if I have Covid-19 and I have queries?

You can call 104 helpline number 24X7 and ask for medical help.

22. How much is the cost of treatment for Covid-19?

Treatment is free in all Govt. health facilities. Private health facility provides treatment but the rates of treatment are fixed by Govt.

23. What is the treatment of Covid-19 and what drugs should I take if I have Covid-19?

- a) If you are asymptomatic and you are in home isolation then you only require Paracetamol for fever and Immunity modulators like Vitamin C, Vitamin D and Zinc.
- b) No medicine has to be taken without advice of the treating physician.
- c) If you are symptomatic and are in hospital, the treating physician will advise and prescribe some drugs as per the clinical condition, temperature and oxygen saturation and as per the guidelines issued by Govt. of Punjab for management of Covid-19:
 - i) Antiviral drugs like Remdesivir may be prescribed by the treating physician as per the condition. This has to be given as injections and can only be given to the hospitalized patient.

- ii) Dexamethasone can also be prescribed by the treating physician. This is a steroid and has been proved to be beneficial for improving survival of the patients. This has to be used only if oxygen saturation falls below 94%.
- iii) Methyl prednisolone is another steroid which can be used by the treating physician in more severe and critical cases in place of Dexamethasone.
- iv) Tocilizumab is another drug but it is still an experimental drug and there is no definitive evidence that it improves the survival of Covid-19 cases.

24. Can I use some home-based remedies for Covid-19?

AYUSH department has recommended Kaadha and some ayurvedic and homeopathic drugs. They can be used as per advice of the physician and as per recommendations of the AYUSH department.

25. If I had COVID-19 infection once, will it protect me from the same disease for rest of my life?

Once you get infected the body produces antibodies, which protects against further infection. However, how long these antibodies stay in the body is still being researched. So, it is too early to assume that infection provides life-long immunity.

26. What precautions the patient should undertake during home isolation?

Patients in home isolation should at all times use triple layer medical mask. Patient must stay in the identified room and away from other people in home, especially elderlies and those with co-morbid conditions like hypertension, cardiovascular disease, renal disease etc. They should maintain strict personal hygiene and self-monitor his/her health with daily temperature and oxygen saturation monitoring / and report promptly if he/she develops any deterioration of symptom.

27. Is there a need to get tested after the home isolation period is over?

No. As per the latest revised discharge policy, there is no need for testing for patients undergoing home isolation (pre-symptomatic/very mild/mild confirmed cases) after the home isolation period is over.

28. What does the current discharge policy mean for patients who are being home isolated?

As detailed above, as far as testing is concerned, there is no need for testing after the home isolation period is over. However, the period of home isolation would end after 17 (10+7) days of symptom onset and no fever for 10 (3+7) days (as the current discharge policy advises that patients isolate themselves at home & self-monitor their health for further 7 days after discharge).

29. Does Discharge policy apply to those undergoing home or facility quarantine?

Discharge policy is meant for patients (symptomatic/pre-symptomatic) to be suffering from COVID-19. Quarantine (home or facility) is meant for asymptomatic/healthy persons who may have been exposed to the COVID-19 infection but have not tested positive for COVID-19. Such persons are in quarantine at home and should get tested from 5-10 days of exposure. If negative there is no question of discharge of such persons. However, their stay under quarantine period will remain 14 days from the date of last exposure.

30. When to seek medical attention Patient

Immediate medical attention must be sought if serious symptoms develop. These could include

- i. Fever/ Difficulty in breathing,
- ii. Dip in oxygen saturation (SpO₂ < 94%)
- iii. Persistent pain/pressure in the chest,
- iv. Mental confusion or inability to arouse,
- v. Slurred speech/seizures
- vi. Weakness or numbness in any limb or face
- vii. Developing bluish discolorations of lips/face

31. Instructions for care-givers of patients who have been home isolated

- Mask: The caregiver should wear a triple layer medical mask appropriately when in the same room with the ill person. Front portion of the mask should not be touched or handled during use. If the mask gets wet or dirty with secretions, it must be changed immediately. Discard the mask after use and perform hand hygiene after disposal of the mask.
- He/she should avoid touching own face, nose or mouth.
- Hand hygiene must be ensured following contact with ill person or his immediate environment.
- Hand hygiene should also be practiced before and after preparing food, before eating, after using the toilet, and whenever hands look dirty. Use soap and water for hand washing at least for 40 seconds. Alcohol-based hand rub can be used, if hands are not visibly soiled.
- Exposure to patient: Avoid direct contact with body fluids of the patient, particularly oral or respiratory secretions. Use disposable gloves while handling the patient. Perform hand hygiene before and after removing gloves.
- Avoid exposure to potentially contaminated items in his immediate environment (e.g. eating utensils, dishes, drinks, used towels or bed linen).
- Food must be provided to the patient in his room
- Utensils and dishes used by the patient should be cleaned with soap/detergent and water wearing gloves. The utensils and dishes may be re-used. Clean hands after taking off gloves or handling used items.
- Use triple layer medical mask and disposable gloves while cleaning or handling surfaces, clothing or linen used by the patient. Perform hand hygiene before and after removing gloves.
- The care giver and all close contact will self-monitor their health with daily temperature monitoring and report promptly if they develop any symptom suggestive of COVID-19 (fever/cough/difficulty in breathing)

Instructions for the patient

- Patient should at all times use triple layer medical mask. Discard mask after 8 hours of use or earlier if they become wet or visibly soiled.
- Mask should be discarded only after disinfecting it with 1% Sodium Hypo-chlorite.

- Patient must stay in the identified room and away from other people in home, especially elderlies and those with co-morbid conditions like hypertension, cardiovascular disease, renal disease etc.
- Patient must take rest and drink lot of fluids to maintain adequate hydration
- Follow respiratory etiquettes all the time.
- Clean surfaces in the room that are touched often (tabletops, door knobs, handles, etc) with 1% hypochlorite solution.
- The patient must strictly follow the physician's instructions and medication advice.
- The patient will self-monitor his/her health with daily temperature monitoring/ saturation and report promptly if he/she develops any deterioration of symptom as detailed below.

32. If a pregnant woman is COVID-19 positive at the time of delivery, her baby will also be positive?

We do not have enough evidence to confidently deny vertical transmission from mother to baby. However, the virus can be transmitted after birth through droplet or fomites.

33. Can a COVID positive mother breastfeed her baby?

Yes. A COVID positive mother should continue breastfeeding her baby. She should practice proper handwashing and hygiene before feeding her child along with maintaining proper sanitation of the feeding area.