

# Medical expert answers your coronavirus questions



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**By: WCTV Eyewitness News**

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TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (WCTV) — With the emergence of the COVID-19 coronavirus in our area, we encourage our viewers to send in their questions about the virus.

On our Friday 4 p.m. show, Dr. Christie Alexander of Florida State University's Medical School joined WCTV's Katie and Ben Kaplan on set to answer your questions.

## Is a person who has the virus but isn't showing any symptoms still able to transmit it to other people?

**A:** Yes. First and foremost, I have to say there is a lot we still don't know about this virus. It's very very important that we are checking in with the target="\_blank">CDC's website on a regular basis. They're going to have up to the minute information about what's going on. ⓧ

That said, to answer that question: Yes. The simple answer is yes. You can be completely asymptomatic, and be transmitting the virus. Like other viruses, it can take a couple of days to start developing symptoms, like the flu for



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example.

So, as you're starting to get sick, you may not feel so bad, but could be shedding the virus.

## How do you tell the difference between symptoms of coronavirus compared to a cold or the flu?

**A:** Very good question. So, yes, they all look very similar, right? A cold, less severe, you might have some sniffles, cough. You might feel a little run down. But you're probably not going to have a high-grade fever.

With the flu though, you will have a fever. You're going to have body aches, night sweats, chills. You're gonna not feel well. You're going to have these symptoms.

With coronavirus, the overlap is that with corona you have fever, cough, shortness of breath and difficulty breathing. So it's going to be hard to tell the difference sometimes, whether it's the flu, whether it's the cold, with the exception of that fever.

And I should add that a fever is anything above 100.4 degrees. Below that, it's not going to constitute as such, which is important in regards to having a thermometer on hand, so you can be checking these things if you feel sick.

## Can you get the virus by touching things like a door knob, money handled by an



# infected person, or mail or packages shipped from China?

A: The thing about this is it can be any surface, not just door knobs, not just money, not just that, but pretty much any surface. If somebody sneezes or coughs and it lands, the respiratory droplets land on a surface, and you go behind them and accidentally touch that surface or grab the door knob, things like that, you can have it on your hands.

The big thing is not touching your face after that, washing your hands right after that. If you do touch your face, it's the mouth, nose and eyes where it's transmitted the most, so keeping in check with that.

So, any surface can do it. Now the good news is, once those respiratory droplets dry, it's a pretty short lived thing. It's not going to live on packages or money or things like that very long. But, if it's recent and they cough, and you go right behind them, you could pick it up on your hands and transmit it to yourself.

## Why is the CDC recommending healthcare workers wear protective masks, but not the general public?

A: We are in contact with very, very sick people. The sickest of the sick. So we're using those really important N-95 masks to prevent against those respiratory droplets from getting into our systems. Those are things like tuberculosis. We use those same masks for that.



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We need to protect ourselves, so we can continue taking care of the sick people we're seeing. The masks that you see around town that are covering the face and go around the ears, those are best used for people who are currently ill. If you're sick and you're coughing, sneezing or things like that, those masks keep those respiratory droplets towards you, instead of being shot out into the general public.

If you're feeling well and wearing a mask like that in the general public, it's not as protective as you may think. It's not protecting you from getting sick, as much as protecting somebody who is sick from transmitting it. Those taking care of the sick wear a mightier mask to keep us from getting sick.

## What are the best precautionary measures the public can take?

**A:** So, we talked about hand washing. The big thing with that is 20 seconds, at least, and really washing your hands. Most people don't spend 20 seconds washing their hands. They're quick to wash, rinse and go. So washing your hands for 20 seconds - with soap and water, I might add, not just water - is key.

If you don't have access because you're out and about, or something like this, carrying around hand sanitizer, doing the same action, as you're washing your hands, with hand sanitizer that has at least 60% alcohol, is the way to go with that.

Beyond that, being careful when you touch things, to wipe down surfaces, when you can. Now you don't have to go crazy with this, but as you're wiping down surfaces, think about the most high-touched surfaces: Phones, keyboards, doorknobs, counters, toilet handles - things that people are touching frequently. Those are the types of things to be wiping down.

If you are sick or you have a little cold and you need to cough or you need to sneeze, do that into a tissue and throw the tissue away. If you don't have access to a tissue, cough into your elbow or your arm, so you're not transmitting the droplets.

If you have to cough into your hand or sneeze into your hand, immediately wash your hands with soap and water or with hand sanitizer. So those are some basic things you can do.

Last but not least, if you are sick, stay home and call your doctor. Don't go out and, hopefully not, transmit it to others. Stay home, call your physician, see what they'd like you to do. They may not even want you to come in, depending on how sick you are.

If you don't have a physician, call the Leon County Health Department. They can direct you accordingly. If you're not sure what to do beyond that, just call one of the ER's, call an urgent care center. Just call before you go, is the main thing

## If someone gets the coronavirus, then recovers, can they get re-infected?

**A:** We aren't sure. That's one of those unknowns at this point. This is something to check the CDC website on. Again, there's things getting updated to the minute. It's important to get in contact with the folks who know.