

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
National Institutes of Health



# In the News: Coronavirus and “Alternative” Treatments



Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses found in many different species of animals, including camels, cattle, and bats. The new strain of coronavirus identified as the cause of the outbreak of respiratory illness in people first detected in Wuhan, China, has been named [COVID-19](#).

(Formerly, it was referred to as 2019-nCoV.) Rarely, animal coronaviruses jump species and infect people, and then possibly spread between people, such as with [MERS-CoV](#), [SARS-CoV](#), and now with COVID-19.

The media has reported that some people are seeking “alternative” remedies to prevent infection with COVID-19 or to treat the virus. Some of these purported remedies include herbal therapies and teas. **There is no scientific evidence that any of these alternative remedies can prevent or cure the illness caused by COVID-19.** In fact, some of them may not be safe to consume.<sup>1</sup>

While scientists at NIH and elsewhere are evaluating candidate therapies and vaccines to treat and prevent the novel coronavirus, currently there are no treatments or vaccines for COVID-19 infection approved by the Food and Drug Administration. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid exposure to this virus. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also recommends everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of this and other respiratory viruses, including the following:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

Stay home when you are sick, and keep children home from school when they are sick.

Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.

Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.

If you feel sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, and have traveled to [high risk countries or regions](#) or were in close contact with someone with COVID-19 in the 14 days before you began to feel sick, seek medical care. Before you go to a doctor's office or emergency room, call ahead and tell them about your recent travel or exposure and your symptoms.

For more information about what everyone can do to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the U.S., including the general public, health care professionals, and travelers, visit [What CDC Recommends](#). For more information on NIH research on coronaviruses, visit the [National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases](#).

---

<sup>1</sup>Coghlan ML, Maker G, Crighton E, et al. [Combined DNA, toxicological and heavy metal analyses provides an auditing toolkit to improve pharmacovigilance of traditional Chinese medicine \(TCM\)](#). *Scientific Reports*. 2015;5:17475.