How to Be Clear During COVID-19

Complexity does not communicate authority. Right now, we need to use the clearest language possible to help people make the right decisions for their health. When using an unfamiliar term, replace it with plain language or include an explanation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNFAMILIAR TERM</th>
<th>EXPLANATION</th>
<th>EXAMPLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asymptomatic/symptomatic</td>
<td>Doesn't feel sick/feels sick</td>
<td>Some people infected with the coronavirus may be asymptomatic, which means they don't feel sick.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community spread</td>
<td>People catching the virus as they go about their daily lives</td>
<td>Closing schools and businesses helps prevent community spread or people from catching the virus as they go about their lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incubation period</td>
<td>The time between catching a virus and feeling sick</td>
<td>According to the CDC, the incubation period (the time from catching the virus to feeling sick) is between 2 and 14 days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intubation</td>
<td>Placed on a ventilator, a machine that helps a patient breathe</td>
<td>If a patient is not getting enough oxygen, a doctor may intubate them, or place them on a ventilator, a machine to help them breathe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novel strain</td>
<td>A new type of virus</td>
<td>Coronavirus have been around for centuries, but COVID-19 is a novel strain or a new type of the virus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathogen</td>
<td>Germ or bacteria</td>
<td>Coronavirus germs can spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient zero</td>
<td>First person with the virus in a new area.</td>
<td>Patient zero are the words we use for the first person who had the virus in a new area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal protective equipment (PPE)</td>
<td>Special masks, clothing and gloves to shield a care provider from the virus</td>
<td>Healthcare workers need more personal protective equipment (masks, clothing and gloves) to prevent them from getting the virus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respiratory disease</td>
<td>Lung disease</td>
<td>Someone with a lung disease, or problems breathing, may be at an increased risk of complications from the virus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Respiratory droplets</strong></td>
<td>Tiny drops of saliva and mucus from your nose, mouth and lungs that can spread when you cough, sneeze, speak or sing</td>
<td>If you have the coronavirus and are seeking medical care, wear a mask to prevent tiny drops of saliva from infecting others when you speak or cough.</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social distancing</strong></td>
<td>Keeping 6’ of space between you and other people</td>
<td>If you need to go to the grocery store or pharmacy, practice social distancing. Keep 6’ of space between you and other people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Super-spreader</strong></td>
<td>A person who spreads the virus to many more people than average</td>
<td>While anyone with COVID-19 can spread the virus, 1 in 5 people may be super-spreaders. That means they may spread the virus to more people than average.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transmission</strong></td>
<td>Virus passing from one person to another</td>
<td>People who are infected but don’t feel sick can still pass the virus to others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Underlying conditions</strong></td>
<td>Health conditions not caused by the virus</td>
<td>Patients who have underlying health conditions (other conditions not caused by the virus) are at higher risk for complications from COVID-19.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ventilator</strong></td>
<td>A machine that pushes air into a person’s lungs to help them breathe</td>
<td>If patients can’t get enough oxygen, doctors may need to use a ventilator, a machine that pushes air into their lungs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Common Coronavirus Terms and Definitions**

Avoid confusion by using the right language and explaining what these often-used terms mean. They are NOT interchangeable.

**Outbreak:** Many people sick with one illness in one area

**Vs. Epidemic:** Widespread illness in one area

**Vs. Pandemic:** Many people sick from one illness around the world

**Surgical mask:** Disposable face mask worn by health professionals to prevent saliva or mucus from coming out or going in

**Vs. N95 respirator:** Special protective mask that filters tiny particles and viruses

**Vs. Face shield:** A clear device that protects the entire face from splashes and sprays

**Self-isolation:** Separating yourself from others because you are sick

**Vs. Self-quarantine:** Separating yourself from others because you may have been exposed to a sick person

**Vs. Shelter in place:** Staying home (regardless of whether you are sick or have been exposed), leaving only for essential needs, such as getting food or medicine

**Flatten the curve:** Slowing the spread of infection, so hospitals and healthcare workers can treat fewer people over time.

For more resources, visit our [COVID-19 marketing page](#) or reach out if you need help creating coronavirus content.