

# CDC: Coronavirus spreads most easily when patients are sickest

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(HealthDay)—Coronavirus is most infectious when patients are at the

peak of their illness, health officials from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Friday.

"Based on what we know now, we believe this virus spreads mainly from person to person among close contacts, which is defined as about six feet, through [respiratory droplets](#) produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes," Nancy Messonnier, M.D., director of the CDC National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases, said during a media briefing on Friday. "People are thought to be the most contagious when they are most symptomatic; that is when they are the sickest."

"Some spread may happen by touching contaminated surfaces and then touching the eyes, nose and mouth," Messonnier said. "But remember, we believe this virus does not last long on surfaces. Some spread may happen before people show symptoms. There have been a few reports of this with the new coronavirus, and it is compatible with what we know about other respiratory viruses, including seasonal flu. But right now, we don't believe these last two forms of transmission are the main driver of spread."

Messonier also noted that the CDC has launched a new strategy aimed at stemming any potential spread of coronavirus within the United States. The "CDC has begun working with five public health labs across the U.S. to tap into their ability to conduct community-based [influenza surveillance](#), so we can begin testing people with flu-like symptoms for novel coronavirus," she said. "This is an extra layer of our response that will help us detect if and when this virus is spreading in the community."

As U.S. health officials devised ways to try to stop the spread of coronavirus in this country, Chinese [health officials](#) said Friday that coronavirus cases in that country continued to climb, reaching nearly 64,000, with a death count approaching 1,400. For the first time, the

number of medical workers who have been infected with the [virus](#) was released Friday, with 1,700 confirmed illnesses and six deaths, the *Associated Press* reported.

**More information:** [AP News Article](#)  
[More Information: CDC](#)

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