



*North Carolina*

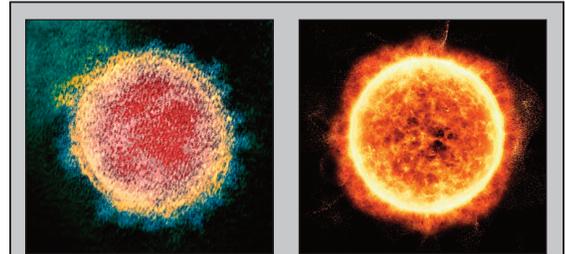
**Retired  
Governmental  
Employees'**

*Association*

## Coronavirus: What NCRGEA members need to know

### What is the coronavirus?

There are several terms you may see in the media referring either to the virus or to the disease that it causes. The World Health Organization (WHO) refers to SARS-CoV-2, which stands for "severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus-2." It is very similar, but more easily spreadable and harmful to humans, than the original SARS virus, which also originated in China and made people ill worldwide between 2002 and 2004. Coronavirus refers to the virus' structure under a microscope, where it appears similar to the corona (Latin for "halo") around the Sun. There are many different forms of coronavirus, but most are not as potentially harmful to humans as SARS-CoV-2.



At left is a photo of the SARS-CoV-2 virus under a microscope, compared to a photo of the Sun's corona at right. The similarity is why viruses of this type received the name "coronavirus." (Left: CDC photo, Right: NASA photo)

The term COVID-19, standing for "coronavirus disease 2019," is the name of the illness caused by SARS-CoV-2. The terms "coronavirus" and "COVID-19" are often used interchangeably in the media to refer to both the virus itself and the illness.

### How does the coronavirus spread?

Like most viruses, the coronavirus most commonly spreads through close contact by infected people with other people. This is why public health officials are asking that people out in public try to stay at least six feet away from others. There is little chance of transmitting this virus at that distance or greater. Coughs and sneezes from infected persons contain coronavirus particles, and they enter the air and can easily be picked up by others in close proximity. Another danger is picking up a virus by touching an object and then touching one's eyes, face, or mouth. Preliminary research indicates that the virus may remain viable on plastic and steel for up to three days, but does not survive on cardboard for more than one day or on copper for more than four hours.

The SARS-CoV-2 virus cannot be transmitted to humans via dogs or cats. Ignore disinformation on social media suggesting otherwise. Your pets are safe to be around!

### Why are older people at serious risk?

The coronavirus typically enters the body through the respiratory system. In younger people, who tend to have stronger immune systems, it rarely gets out of the upper respiratory tract. Many young people have only mild symptoms or may not even feel sick at all. However, until they are virus-free, they can still spread coronavirus just like anyone else. Older people, with less efficient immune responses, are at risk of the virus getting into their lower respiratory tract and lungs, which makes the illness much more dangerous. It can cause severe breathing problems and also contribute to the development of pneumonia in the lungs.

At present, there is no evidence that companion animals / pets such as dogs or cats can be infected with the new coronavirus. However, it is always a good idea to wash your hands with soap and water after contact with pets. This protects you against various common bacteria such as E. coli and Salmonella that can pass between pets and humans.

**Can pets at home spread the new coronavirus (2019-nCoV)?**

World Health Organization #Coronavirus

Adults age 60 and older, especially ones with other health issues like diabetes, high blood pressure, pre-existing respiratory problems such as COPD, or those with a chronic (managed) cancer of any type, are at greatly increased risk and should take additional precautions.

### How can I reduce my risk of infection?

Observe voluntary “social distancing” guidelines as recommended by healthcare personnel. Maintain at least three feet (0.9m) distance between yourself and others when it public, and preferably six feet (1.8m), especially if you see persons who are coughing.

Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water. The virus is known to be easily destroyed by ordinary soap and water, so washing your hands or using alcohol-based hand rub kills viruses that may be on your hands. Washing your hands is more effective than even using sterile rubber gloves at lowering your risk.

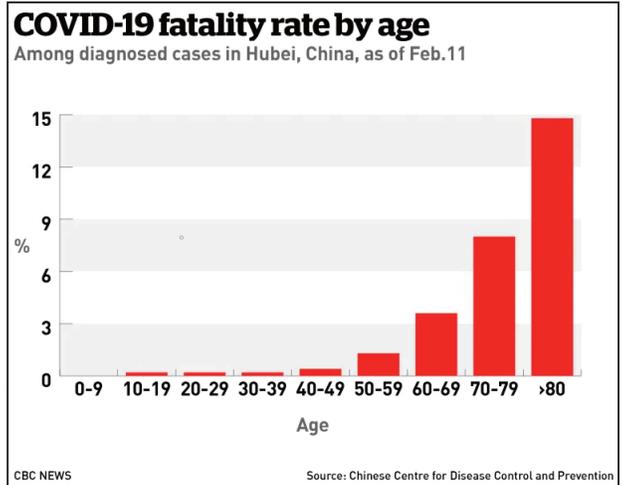
## Social Distancing

AVOID	USE CAUTION	OK TO DO
Group gatherings	Visiting restaurants	Walking/Hiking
Sleepovers	Grocery shopping	Gardening
Play-dates	Getting take-out food	Housecleaning
Concerts	Picking up medication	Reading a book
Theatre outings	Visiting the library	Listening to music
Athletic events	Religious services	Cooking at home
Shopping malls	Traveling	Going for a drive
Workouts and gyms	Visiting hospitals or clinics	Group video chats
Non-essential workers at home		Watching TV
Mass transit systems		Calling to check on friends or elderly neighbors

### Where can I find more information about the coronavirus?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC.gov](http://CDC.gov)) and the World Health Organization ([www.who.int](http://www.who.int)) have the most robust information available about the coronavirus. For information specific to North Carolina, visit the state’s Department of Public Health at [publichealth.nc.gov](http://publichealth.nc.gov). Additional resources and links are available on the NCRGEA website at [www.ncrgea.com](http://www.ncrgea.com).

Be wary of unsolicited links in email or text messages claiming to have information about the coronavirus. There have been many reports of malicious actors using the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) situation as a mechanism to target people with malware and scams. Only trust reputable sources for information about the virus. If you think you have been the target of a Coronavirus-related scam, report it to the N.C. Attorney General’s office at (877) 5-NO-SCAM or [ncdoj.gov/complaint](http://ncdoj.gov/complaint).



Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth, especially when in public places. Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth. From there, the virus can enter your body and can make you sick.

Stay home if you feel unwell. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and call in advance. Follow the directions of your local health authority.