Image Credit: Cincinnati Museum Center

What is the COVID-19 pandemic?

COVID-19 ("CO" for corona, "VI" for virus, and "D" for disease) is an illness caused by a type of coronavirus discovered in 2019. A pandemic occurs when a disease spreads quickly across a large area.

How does the virus spread?

The COVID-19 virus travels by tiny droplets that a sick person releases when they exhale. When a healthy person inhales those droplets, the virus gets into their body and can make them sick. Also, if a healthy person gets the virus on their hands and touches their mouth, nose or eyes, they can bring the virus into their body.

This virus can be in your body for several days before it makes you feel ill. Some people have the disease but never feel sick, so they may spread it without even knowing.

How does COVID-19 make you sick?

When the COVID-19 virus gets into your body, it invades your body's cells. The virus uses your cells to make copies of itself, killing your cells when new virus particles are released.

While some people may not feel sick or have a very mild illness, others may become very sick and require hospital care.
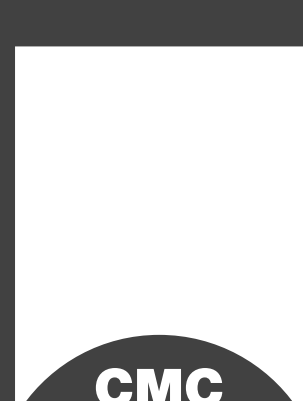
Vaccines train our bodies to fight illness

Vaccines prevent us from getting sick by training our bodies to fight viruses. Viruses attack our bodies in different ways, so vaccines respond to individual viruses. The COVID-19 vaccine helps your body recognize and block that virus from making you very sick.

After vaccination, you may feel sore, tired, or achy. These reactions result from your body building defenses against the virus; most symptoms go away in a day or so. The vaccine cannot give you COVID-19.

COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. Years of related research and lots of collaboration helped scientists, doctors and nurses develop COVID-19 vaccines quickly. The available vaccines were approved after following strict research requirements, which the U.S. has used for several decades.

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Panels created by Cincinnati Museum Center, with assistance from Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center and UC Health

Image Credit: Cincinnati USA CVB | Louis Rideout

Image Credit: Coney Island

Take Action

Imagine the day you can stop wearing a mask or when you can safely gather with friends and family at your favorite restaurant again. That day is coming — but only if we keep ourselves, our families and our communities healthy and safe.

Take these steps to keep you and your family safe from COVID-19:

Get your vaccine as soon as you are eligible

Wear a close-fitting mask over your nose and mouth

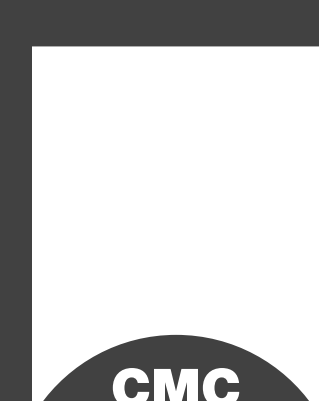Keep a safe distance from people who aren't part of your household

Thoroughly wash your hands

Don't touch your face

Follow guidance from your doctor and public health agencies

The Cincinnati Region Responds

We can help end the COVID-19 pandemic. By getting vaccinated, social distancing, wearing masks and washing our hands, we ensure that we will come together again.

Cincinnatians are also leading research efforts:

- More than 12,000 Cincinnati-area residents volunteered for vaccine research studies.

- Cincinnati Children's Gamble Vaccine Research Center is leading trials of several COVID-19 vaccines.

- Covington-based Clinical Trial & Consulting (CTI) is organizing several COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials.

- University of Cincinnati and UC Health researchers led vaccine trials, and they are investigating how the virus spreads and why some people get sicker than others. Studying treatment options and vaccines will help protect us from future infections.

This isn't the first time that Cincinnatians have led vaccine research. In the 1950s, Albert Sabin, a professor at UC College of Medicine and a doctor at Cincinnati Children's, developed a new polio vaccine. Given by mouth, it was easier to distribute than a shot. Thanks to immunization efforts, we've been able to eliminate the poliovirus from the Western Hemisphere.

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Image Credit: Atlas Imaging