

The Seattle Times**Health****The Seattle Times**

Fact check: Debunking 10 myths about the coronavirus that causes COVID-19

April 3, 2020 at 6:00 am | Updated April 3, 2020 at 10:23 am



(Illustrations by Gabriel Campanario)

By [Seattle Times graphics staff](#)

As the new coronavirus that causes COVID-19 spreads across the globe, so does misinformation about it. Here's a look at 10 claims about the virus, along with the facts from trusted sources.



MYTH

Young people are not susceptible to this coronavirus.

FACT

People of all ages can be infected. Older people and people with preexisting medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes or heart disease) appear to be more vulnerable to becoming severely ill. But young people can carry — and spread — the virus, even if they don't show symptoms.

Source: [World Health Organization](#)

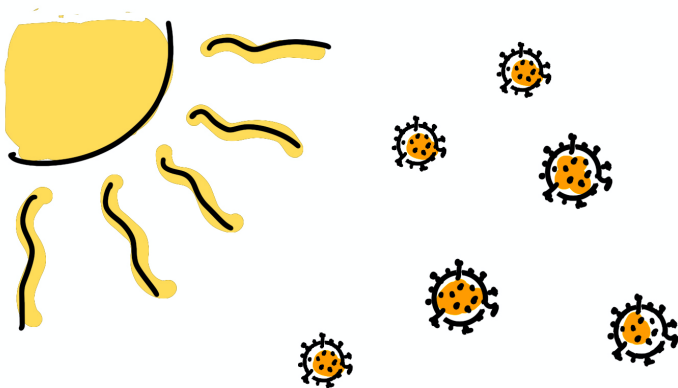
MYTH

The coronavirus can't survive airborne or on surfaces.

FACT

Researchers have found that droplets carrying the virus can travel through the air and stay suspended for about half an hour. They can also settle on surfaces, where the virus can last longer — up to 24 hours on cardboard and up to 72 hours on plastic and steel. The risk of getting infected from touching these materials, however, remains low because the virus' ability to infect decreases rapidly over time.

Source: [The New York Times](#)



MYTH

Hot weather makes the virus disappear.

FACT

“You can catch COVID-19, no matter how sunny or hot the weather is,” according to the World Health Organization. So far, evidence shows the virus that causes COVID-19 can be transmitted anywhere, and places with hot and humid weather have reported cases. Regardless of climate, take protective measures if you live in, or travel to, an area where the virus is present.

Source: [World Health Organization](#)

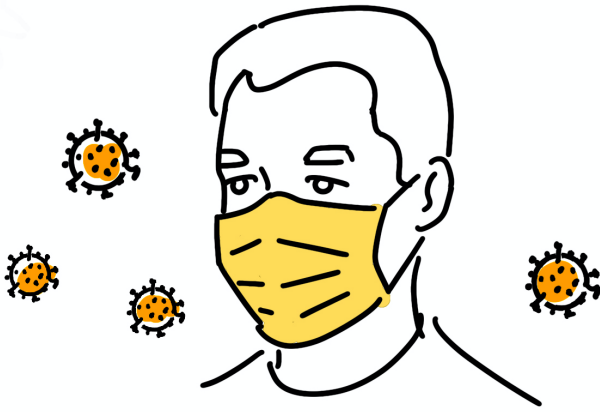
MYTH

Taking a hot bath prevents you from getting infected with the virus.

FACT

The temperature of your bath doesn't change your normal body temperature and won't affect whether you catch this virus. But washing your hands frequently is a great way to keep from getting sick, because it will eliminate viruses that may be on your hands and avoid infection that could occur if you then touch your eyes, mouth or nose.

Source: [World Health Organization](#)



MYTH

Face masks don't work to prevent infection.

FACT

A face mask isn't guaranteed to keep you from getting sick, but the protection is better than nothing. A mask can help capture some droplets that carry the virus. And it's important to note that wearing a mask isn't just about protecting yourself; it can also help keep you from passing viruses to others.

This coronavirus seems to be spread even by people who aren't showing symptoms. As of Friday morning, April 3, the White House coronavirus task force was formalizing new guidance to recommend that many Americans wear face coverings of some kind — even T-shirts or bandannas — when going outside or to places like grocery stores or pharmacies.

Even if you're wearing a mask, make sure to follow social distancing and hygiene guidelines recommended by public health officials; for instance, stay at least 6 feet from other people, wash your hands often and don't touch your face.

Make sure you know how to use your mask and keep it clean. Wash your hands thoroughly before touching it.

Medical-grade masks — particularly N-95 masks, which are the most effective but are in short supply — should be reserved for medical professionals who deal directly with

sick patients.

Sources: [World Health Organization](#); [The New York Times](#); [The Associated Press](#)

MYTH

Covering your body with alcohol or chlorine kills the virus.

FACT

Spraying alcohol or chlorine all over yourself won't kill viruses that have already entered your body. Spraying such substances can be harmful to clothes or mucous membranes, such as those in your eyes and mouth. Both alcohol and chlorine can be useful to disinfect surfaces, but they need to be used according to appropriate recommendations.

Source: [World Health Organization](#)



MYTH

Rinsing your nose with saline prevents infection.

FACT

Some people are familiar with this tactic because there is limited evidence that

regularly rinsing your nose with saline can help you recover more quickly from the common cold. However, rinsing your nose doesn't prevent respiratory infections such as the virus that causes COVID-19.

Source: [World Health Organization](#)

MYTH

Eating garlic protects you against the new coronavirus.

FACT

There's no evidence from the current outbreak that eating garlic has protected people. It's a healthy food that may have some antimicrobial properties, but that's unrelated to COVID-19.

Source: [World Health Organization](#)



MYTH

Hand dryers effectively kill the coronavirus.

FACT

Hand dryers aren't effective at eliminating the virus. If you use a hand dryer and

touch your face afterward, you could get infected. You can use a warm air dryer or paper towel to dry your hands after thoroughly washing your hands with soap and water, but it's the washing that eliminates the virus, not the dryer.

Source: [World Health Organization](#)

MYTH

Taking ibuprofen might worsen COVID-19 symptoms.

FACT

There's no evidence to support this suggestion, according to the World Health Organization and other leading agencies.

Source: [The Associated Press](#)

Illustrations by Gabriel Campanario, Seattle Times news artist

Coronavirus resources

- [What to do if you're sick: Call your doctor and stay home](#)
 - [10 coronavirus myths debunked](#)
 - [Working from home? 8 important ergonomic tips](#)
 - [What you need to do to get your government stimulus check](#)
 - [Tips for cleaning, disinfecting your home and your phone](#)
 - [Sign up for breaking news alerts](#)
 - [More on coronavirus »](#)
-

How is this outbreak affecting you?

What has changed about your daily life? What kinds of discussions are you having with family members and friends? Are you a health care worker who's on the front lines of the response? Are you a COVID-19 patient or do you know one? Whoever you are, we want to hear from you so our news coverage is as complete, accurate and useful as possible. [If you're using a mobile device and can't see the form on this page, click here.](#)

The Seattle Times

How is the COVID-19 pandemic affecting you? What changes have you noticed in your life or habits? What kinds of discussions are you having about it?

0/400

Your contact info

We'll be in touch if we need more information.

Name

Email address

Phone number

ZIP code

☒ I want to receive Breaking News Alert emails

☐ Please don't publish my name

Submit

By clicking Submit, you agree to The Seattle Times' [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#).

Powered by Harken

Do you have questions about the novel coronavirus?

Ask your question in the form below and we'll dig for answers. If you're using a mobile device and can't see the form on this page, [ask your question here](#). You can see questions we've already answered [on this FAQ](#). If you have specific medical questions, please contact your doctor.

The Seattle Times

What questions do you have about the novel coronavirus or COVID-19, the illness it causes?

0/140

Your contact info

We'll be in touch if we look into your question.

Name

Email address

ZIP code

☒ Sign me up for the Morning Brief newsletter

☐ Please don't publish my name

Submit

By clicking Submit, you agree to The Seattle Times' [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#).

Powered by Hearken

Seattle Times graphics staff: NewsGraphicsArtists@seattletimes.com;