A [coronavirus](https://www.webmd.com/lung/coronavirus) is a kind of common [virus](https://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/how-scientists-identify-virus) that causes an infection in your nose, sinuses, or upper throat. Most coronaviruses aren't dangerous.

COVID-19 is a disease that can cause what doctors call a respiratory tract infection. It can [affect your upper respiratory tract](https://www.webmd.com/lung/coronavirus-covid-19-affects-body) (sinuses, nose, and throat) or [lower respiratory tract](https://www.webmd.com/lung/what-does-covid-do-to-your-lungs) (windpipe and lungs). It's caused by a coronavirus named SARS-CoV-2. It spreads the same way other coronaviruses do, mainly through person-to-person contact. Infections range from mild to serious.

SARS-CoV-2 is one of seven types of coronavirus, including the ones that cause severe diseases like Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) and sudden acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). The other coronaviruses cause most of the [colds](https://www.webmd.com/cold-and-flu/default.htm) that affect us during the year but aren’t a serious threat for otherwise healthy people.

In early 2020, after a December 2019 [outbreak](https://www.webmd.com/cold-and-flu/what-are-epidemics-pandemics-outbreaks) in China, the World Health Organization identified SARS-CoV-2 as a new type of coronavirus. The outbreak quickly spread around the world. (Michael W. Smith, 2020)

The United States is the new epicenter of the coronavirus pandemic due to a very large acceleration in infections there, according to the World Health Organization. The highly contagious respiratory virus has infected more than 42,000 people in the United States, prompting more governors to join states ordering Americans to stay at home. (Emma Farge, 2020)

Some of the conspiracy theories of the corona virus include:

1. Was coronavirus caused by Chinese people eating bats?

The exact origin of the virus is unknown at this time although it is thought to have emerged at a seafood market in Wuhan, China. It is also thought that the first people infected with the new coronavirus contracted it from animals, because coronaviruses are known to move from animals to humans. A report by the Wuhan Institute for Virology found that the new coronavirus’ genetic makeup was 96 per cent identical to the kind found in bats, which were also the original source of SARS. In light of this information, videos which appear to show Chinese people eating bats have circulated over the past few weeks, with some people blaming Chinese eating habits for the outbreak. In one widely-shared video, a young Chinese woman, Wang Mengyun, was shown biting into a bat and saying it tasted “like chicken meat”. However, Miss Wang has since said the video was filmed in Palau, not China, back in 2017 and is not connected to the recent outbreak, she said she had no idea during filming that there was such a virus, in an apology, adding that she was “just trying to introduce the life of local people”. The search for the exact origin of the virus is still ongoing.

1. Does a patent show there is a vaccine for the virus?

Several viral Facebook posts, tweets and articles have alleged that the new coronavirus outbreak is related to an expired patent, with some claiming that a vaccine for the virus already exists. Shiva Ayyadurai, a Republican running for the US Senate in Massachusetts, recently shared a post which claimed: “The Coronavirus patent is owned by the Pirbright Institute.” The simple problem with this theory is that there are many types of coronaviruses and seven kinds which can infect humans. The term describes a group of viruses which can cause respiratory infections, ranging from the common cold to more dangerous conditions such as SARS or MERS. The Wuhan coronavirus is a new strain and there is currently no vaccine for it.

## Is Bill Gates linked to the outbreak?

In connection with the Pirbright Institute conspiracy, some people have attempted to link the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to the outbreak, due to a multi-million dollar grant given to the research group by the foundation.

However, this is what Teresa Maughan, a spokesperson for Pirbright, told Buzzfeed News when asked about the connection: “The patented work cited in the conspiracy theories involved infectious bronchitis virus (IBV) only, and we made four changes in the gene responsible for replicating the virus’s genetic material. “This has weakened the virus so it is no longer able to cause disease and has potential to be used as a vaccine, but has not yet been developed. “The patented work was completed in 2015 and is not funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.” The funding does nothing to prove, or even suggest, that the Gates Foundation knew about the coronavirus outbreak in advance or played a role in causing it.

1. Did coronavirus come from a 'biological weapons programme'?

Another baseless theory that has appeared on social media is the suggestion that the virus is linked to a “covert biological weapons programme” in Wuhan or that it was smuggled from a Canadian laboratory. Both claims have no evidence to support them.

The Canadian laboratory in question is the National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg, which in 2013 investigated a new cluster of coronavirus infections. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has said early reports suggest the virus originated at a seafood and animal market in Wuhan. Both the CDC and the World Health Organisation are still investigating the cause of the outbreak, but neither have suggested it is related to biological weapons. (Duncan, 2020)

Is the coronavirus natural or man-made?

Scientists from around the world: Scripps Research, Tulane University, University of Sydney, University of Edinburgh, and Columbia University were able to prove that the SARS-CoV-2’s design and M.O. are the result of a natural evolution of the virus, rather than laboratory engineering. “By comparing the available genome sequence data for known coronavirus strains, we can firmly determine that SARS-CoV-2 originated through natural processes,” Scripps Research’s Scripps Research [told Science Daily](https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/03/200317175442.htm). The researchers analyzed the genome of the SARS-CoV-2 virus in search of the chemical components that allow it to grab onto human cells (a spike protein) and the cleavage site that lets the virus enter the host cells. They found that the spike protein is targeting ACE2 receptors on the outside of human cells, which are responsible for regulating blood pressure. The team concluded that the binding to ACE2 was so effective that it can only have occurred via natural selection, not genetic engineering. Furthermore, they compared the genome to other viruses known to cause illness. If it were constructed in a lab, the COVID-19 virus would have resembled some of the existing viruses.

The discovery should kill conspiracy theories. What the researchers tried to understand was how the virus mutated so that the scientific community might take steps to prevent future outbreaks. They’re working with two different premises. One says the virus could have evolved to the current state inside an animal before jumping to humans. If that’s the case, then future epidemics might occur since we have little information about how widespread the SARS-CoV-2 presence in those animals might be. The second hypothesis is that the virus jumped to humans first, where it then mutated to its current, pathogenic form. That’s to say that once defeated in humans, the virus might disappear for good barring other mutations. (Smith, 2020)

The impacts of the corona virus include:

The clearest and most immediate business impact of the coronavirus pandemic has been a major disruption to supply chains: Having originated in China, the region was hit hard as a large number of citizens contracted the disease and many were forced into quarantine. This led to partial and full shutdowns of plants and factories, some of which were being used by prominent technology companies to manufacture their goods and products. For example, Apple experienced shortages on its iPhone supply as a result of the company's primary manufacturer, Foxconn, shutting down much of its production in China. While companies often have contingency plans, which revolve around ramping up production in a region that isn't impacted, the rapid spread of the coronavirus across the globe makes it very difficult to pinpoint which regions would be least affected.

The spread of the coronavirus has caused several of the most important tech conferences to be canceled, likely resulting in numerous missed partnership opportunities: Most notably, Mobile World Congress (MWC), which was set to take place February 24-27 in Barcelona, was canceled due to concerns over the virus. Beyond MWC, Facebook canceled its F8 developer conference and Global Marketing Summit; Google shifted its Google Cloud Next event to online only; and IBM likewise had to live stream its developer's conference, which last year hosted over 30,000 attendees. Altogether, the cancellation of major tech events has incurred over $1 billion in direct economic losses, according to estimates from PredictHQ cited by Recode.

Companies with supply chains dependent on China might begin to reduce their ad spend as a way to mitigate economic losses.Already, there is evidence to suggest a slowdown in Amazon ad spending, particularly among smaller third-party sellers that already have tighter cash flow. It's possible that this trend could extend to the other digital platforms if problems continue.

Additional event cancellations could cause advertisers to miss out on typically reliable, high-profile opportunities, which may not have appealing substitutes within the year.A significant number of cultural and industry events have been canceled or postponed over the past few weeks, ranging from Facebook's F8 developer conference to the NBA season.

The spread of coronavirus is likely to boost digital media consumption across the board as people spend more time at home and communicate in person less. In the US, where the effects of the virus are still relatively new, we expect digital media consumption to increase across social media, over-the-top video and online gaming similar to what we've already seen in China.

Social networks could be a major beneficiary, as people turn to these platforms to connect with friends and family who may be at a distance or to access news content.Beyond encouraging more virtual conversation between family and friends, the fast-changing nature of the coronavirus could translate to more users tracking real-time news updates via social media. Streaming video services are also likely to benefit as people seek out more entertainment or news content.The biggest bumps in usage and time spent are likely to go to dominant SVODs, like Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime Video.

Also, media platforms popular among young people could see a boost as kids and teens spend more time indoors, and in particular if school closures spread further. A few examples: family-friendly SVOD like Disney+, social platforms favored among young people like TikTok and YouTube, community-based live streaming platforms like Twitch and interactive platforms like Fortnite, where young people go to hang out and explore virtual worlds. Lastly, **cashless payment adoption and usage could increase worldwide.** In response to the outbreak, the World Health Organization (WHO) is recommending that consumers pay contactlessly rather than with cash, if possible, as a means of limiting the virus' spread through microorganisms on cash. Some countries are taking this a step further: South Korea, for example, is quarantining all cash received at the central bank for two weeks before disinfecting it and putting it back into circulation, and China is undertaking similar efforts. (eMarketer, 2020)

Therefore, the great powers and other countries have handled this pandemic by declaring lockdowns and providing for their citizens.

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