

The ten points you should
“now” know about COVID-19
as of October, 2020

Number of Cases and Severity

- Q 1 In Japan, so far how many people have been diagnosed with COVID-19?
- Q 2 Among those who have been diagnosed with the disease, how many have become seriously ill or have passed away?
- Q 3 Among those who have been diagnosed with the disease, who are likely to become seriously ill?
- Q 4 Does Japan have more cases than other countries?

Infectiousness

- Q 5 How long is the period in which people with COVID-19 can spread it to others?
- Q 6 Among those who have been diagnosed with COVID-19, how many have passed the disease onto others?
- Q 7 In what situations should I be careful in order to avoid the further spread of COVID-19?

Testing and Treatment

- Q 8 What kind of tests are there for COVID-19?
- Q 9 What treatments are available for COVID-19?
- Q 10 Are there any vaccines that have been put to use?

Q 1 In Japan, so far how many people have been diagnosed with COVID-19?

A.

So far, there have been approximately **96,000** confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Japan, which is **roughly 0.08%** of the country's total population.

Those who are in their 20's have contracted the virus more than people of any other age group. Approximately 0.2% of people in their 20's have contracted the virus.

* There are people who have contracted the virus but do not get tested or see the doctor because they have no symptoms. Therefore, the reported number of cases does not necessarily equate to the total number of those who have actually been infected.

*These numbers are from October 27th, 2020.

Q 2 Among those who have been diagnosed with the disease, how many have become seriously ill or have passed away?

A.

Among the people who have been diagnosed with COVID-19, the rates of people who develop serious symptoms (aggravation rate) or pass away (mortality rate) **vary depending on their ages**. The rates tend to be higher for elderly people and lower for younger people.

Both **aggravation rate and mortality rate are getting lower than before**. Among those who have been diagnosed since June;

- About 1.6% have become seriously ill (**0.3% for patients in their 50's or younger, 8.5% for patients in their 60's or older**); and
- About 1.0% have died (**0.06% for patients in their 50's or younger, 5.7% for people in their 60's or older.**)

*"Aggravation rate" is the rate of patients who received treatment in the ICU or by a ventilator etc., or cases of death out of the number of people who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 including those without symptoms.

Q 3 Among those who have been diagnosed with the disease, who are likely to become seriously ill?

A.

Among those who are diagnosed with COVID-19, **the elderly and those who have underlying diseases are likely to become seriously ill.** The underlying diseases that can increase the risk of aggravation include **chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), chronic kidney disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, and obesity.**

It is said that pregnant women and people who smoke also should take care although it is not clear whether pregnancy or smoking habits increase the risk of aggravation.

Q 4 Does Japan have more cases than other countries?

A.

Compared with the world's average or the number of major countries, the number of cases and the deaths per one million people remain relatively low in Japan.

Q5 How long is the period in which people with COVID-19 can spread it to others?

A.

It is said that people can spread COVID-19 **as early as about two days before the symptoms start until 7 to 10 days after the symptoms start.**

Out of this period, people are likely to release the largest amount of the virus immediately before and after the symptoms start.

Therefore, it is crucial for those who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 to try to **prevent the spread of the virus by avoiding going out for non-essential or non-urgent purposes even if they have no symptoms.**

Q 6 Among those who have been diagnosed with COVID-19, how many have passed the disease onto others?

A.

Apparently, **less than 20%** of those who are infected have **spread the disease to others, while most of those infected have not passed the virus on.** Therefore, **COVID-19 is controllable if we can prevent each patient from passing the virus onto multiple people** by, e.g., avoiding contacting many people without taking protective measures in situations with the “Three-Cs” (closed, crowded, close).

Realizing the possibility of contracting the virus, it is important for all of us to act responsibly, such as avoiding going out for non-urgent, non-essential purposes when not feeling well, and by wearing a mask when meeting another person.

*It was found out that wearing a mask reduces the intake of the virus when we meet someone with it (60-80% decrease when an infected person wears a cloth mask, and 20-40% decrease when a person who meets an infected person wears a cloth mask).

Q 7 In what situations should I be careful in order to avoid the further spread of COVID-19?

A.

COVID-19 spreads mainly via droplet infection and contact infection, so the risk of infection increases in situations with the “Three-Cs” (Closed, Crowded, and Close).

We also need to be careful in the following situations:

Going drinking with others; Eating and drinking with a large number of people for an extended period of time;

Conversations without a mask; Living/lodging together in a narrow space; Changing of places.

Five situations with higher risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19 (1)

Situation 1 **Going drinking with others**

-When you are under the influence of alcohol, your concentration is likely to fall.

Hearing can also be affected, which leads to speaking louder to one another.

-The risk of infection increases in particular when a large number of people are in an enclosed space for a long period of time.

-Sharing chopsticks or glasses also raises the risk of infection.

Situation 2 **Eating and drinking with a large number of people for an extended period of time**

-Eating and drinking for many hours, drinking at host/hostess clubs, bar-hopping, all carry a higher risk of infection than normal meals.

-When a group of people, for example more than 4 people eat or drink together, people tend to speak louder, which increases the infection risk.

Five situations with higher risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19 (2)

Situation 3 **Conversations without a mask**

- Conversations in close proximity without masks raise the risk of droplets/aerosol infection.
- Infection during daytime karaoke has been reported, where people did not wear masks.
- Care should also be taken when traveling by car or bus.

Situation 4 **Living/lodging together in a narrow space**

- When living or lodging with others in a narrow space, people tend to share the same closed space for a long time, which increases the risk of infection.
- Cases have been reported where infection was suspected of appearing in shared spaces such as rooms or toilets of dormitories.

Situation 5 **Changing of places**

- Infection risk can go up with a change in setting, such as during the intermission from work, where people tend to lower their guard.
- Cases have been reported where infection was suspected of occurring in office lounges, smoking areas, and locker rooms.

Q 8 What kind of tests are there for COVID-19?

A.

For testing COVID-19, there are PCR (polymerase chain reaction) tests, quantitative antigen tests, qualitative antigen tests, among others. All of these tests tell if the tested person has the virus in their body and if they are infected.

Along with the development of testing methods, saliva or a nasal swab can be used for testing in addition to a nasopharyngeal swab (a sample collected from the deep into the nose) depending on the kinds of tests and symptoms.

An antibody test is designed to check if a person had the virus in the past. It cannot be used to check if a person is currently infected.

Q 9 What treatments are available for COVID-19?

A.
In many cases where patients have mild symptoms, they need only be under observation status and will get well without any special treatments. Where necessary, symptomatic treatments such as antipyretics (fever medicine) are provided.

When breathing difficulty occurs, oxygen is provided, steroids (medicine to reduce inflammation) or antiviral medicine^{*1} is given. If these do not improve the conditions of the patient, intensive care^{*2} may be provided, e.g., through the use of ventilators.

As these treatment methods are now established, the death rate of the hospitalized COVID-19 patients has been reducing.

If you have any symptoms like a fever or cough, please first consult with a local medical facility.

*1 Remdesivir was approved in Japan as an antiviral medicine for COVID-19. (As of October 29, 2020)

*2 The rate of patients who need intensive care or pass away is approximately 1.6% (0.3% for people in their 50's or younger and 8.5% for patients in their 60's or older).

Q10 Are there any vaccines that have been put to use?

A.

- On-going development of vaccines for COVID-19

A. Many research projects are currently underway around the world aiming for an early development of practical vaccines for COVID-19. They are advancing faster than usual, and some vaccine candidates are now already doing clinical trials.

- Effectiveness of vaccines

A. In general, vaccines are effective in preventing the symptoms of infectious diseases from emerging, and in making the diseases less deadly.

Currently, it is not yet clear whether the vaccine candidates actually produce these effects.

- Safety of vaccines

A. It is impossible to completely avoid health hazards from side reactions to the vaccination, although such hazards are extremely rare.

Researchers are currently checking possible side reactions to COVID-19 vaccine candidates through clinical trials and other studies.

Regarding overseas vaccine candidates* that are expected to be provided to Japan, negative effects after vaccination have been reported, including pain at injection site, headache, fatigue and muscle pain, yet some events might not be associated with the vaccination.

*Vaccine candidates being developed by Pfizer, AstraZeneca and Novavax