

Name \_\_\_\_\_ COVID-19

## What is a Novel Coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a category of viruses that affect the respiratory systems of mammals. One of the meanings of the word “novel” is “new.” So a novel coronavirus is a new coronavirus, meaning it has not yet been identified by and is not familiar to scientists and the medical community. Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is not the same as any other coronavirus we have seen before.



There are many different kinds of coronaviruses. The most common coronavirus that affects humans, as well as one of the mildest, the common cold, is caused by a type of coronavirus. The flu is also a coronavirus. Each kind of coronavirus has certain characteristics, and scientists classify coronaviruses according to what characteristics they share. There are four main types of coronaviruses. They are called alpha, beta, delta, and gamma. Most coronaviruses only affect mammals, but coronaviruses that fall into the alpha or beta category can be transmitted from mammals to humans, which is what scientists believe happened with COVID-19.

The novel coronavirus COVID-19 first appeared in Wuhan, China at the end of 2019. The CO stands for corona, VI stands for virus, and D stands for disease. The 19 represents when the virus first appeared. This name follows the best practices outlined by the World Health Organization (WHO) for how to name new infectious disease affecting the human population.

COVID-19 is not the first coronavirus to cause a pandemic. In 2002, the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) virus also originated in China, dying off the following year. The Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) coronavirus originated in Saudi Arabia in 2012 and continues to infect people today.