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# Inside Infection Control Participant Booklet

# Welcome

Thank you for joining us. This booklet is a quick guide to the information presented in each topic, including topic overviews, learning objectives, key messages and content outlines, and space to write. Please keep it with you to use during the sessions.

## About Project Firstline

Our goal at Project Firstline is to make sure you have the infection control knowledge that you need and deserve to keep yourself, your patients, your colleagues, and your family safe.

To stop the spread of infectious disease threats—including COVID-19—anyone working in a healthcare facility needs a basic knowledge of infection control and must understand and be ready to use infection control processes and procedures throughout their work day, including during every patient care activity and healthcare interaction.

CDC's Project Firstline is a collaborative of diverse healthcare, public health, and academic partners that is working to provide engaging, innovative, and effective infection control training for millions of frontline U.S. healthcare workers as well as members of the public health workforce.

## Infection Control

- **Works**—The right practices can stop germs from spreading in healthcare facilities.
- **Is a Team Effort**—Infection control is most effective when all team members use it consistently.
- **Matters**—Infection control is a critical part of safe healthcare delivery in all healthcare settings.

# What's a Respiratory Droplet? Why Does It Matter?

## Overview

**Topic Three:** How Respiratory Droplets Spread COVID-19

**Content summary:** How does SARS-CoV-2 get from one person to another: what is a respiratory droplet?

**Inside Infection Control Video:** *What's a Respiratory Droplet? Why Does It Matter?*

## Learning Objectives

By the end of this episode, participants will be able to:

- Describe one characteristic (1) of respiratory droplets
- Understand one (1) primary way that SARS-CoV-2 moves between people
- Explain one (1) reason why infection control actions focus on keeping respiratory droplets out of the air and away from other people

## Key Educational Takeaways

- Our breath contains a lot of water that you can't usually see.
  - ▶ When we see our breath in cold air or see our glasses fog up when we're wearing a mask, what we're seeing is all the water in our breath.
  - ▶ Those are our respiratory droplets.
- The main way that SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes the disease COVID-19, travels between people is through respiratory droplets.
  - ▶ When someone is infected with SARS-CoV-2, the droplets that they breathe out have virus particles in them.
  - ▶ People who are close by can breathe the droplets in, or the droplets can land on their eyes, and they can get infected.

## Content Outline

- Different viruses spread from person to person in different ways.
- The main way that SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes the disease COVID-19, travels between people is through respiratory droplets.
- These droplets aren't large, like you would see from a splash in a sink. They're very tiny.
- The droplets have different sizes, but most of them are so small that we can't see them most of the time.
- We usually can't see the water in our breath, but when we do things like breathe on a mirror and fog it up, we're seeing our respiratory droplets.

- We're also seeing our respiratory droplets when we're outside in cold weather and can see our breath, or when our eyeglasses fog up when we're wearing a mask.
- Every time we let breath out of our nose or mouth, we're letting out respiratory droplets – when we're talking, singing, coughing, or even just breathing normally.
- The droplets not only have different sizes, they also travel in the air for different distances.
- The droplets are small and light enough that they can reach other people who are close by.
- When someone is infected with SARS-CoV-2, the droplets that they breathe out have virus particles in them.
- If people who are close by aren't wearing masks or aren't behind a barrier, then they can breathe the droplets in, or the droplets can land on their eyes.
- When droplets carrying virus get into someone's nose, mouth, or eyes, or travels to their lungs, the virus lands on cells.
- Like many other respiratory viruses, SARS-CoV-2 is able to get into a lot of cells in the nose, throat, eyes, and lungs. The virus can then hijack those cells and make the person sick with COVID-19.
- Since respiratory droplets are the main way that SARS-CoV-2 moves between people, many of the infection control actions we need to take in healthcare are things to keep people, including our patients, our coworkers, and ourselves, from breathing in each other's respiratory droplets.

## Notes



**PROJECT  
FIRSTLINE**

CDC's National Training Collaborative  
for Healthcare Infection Prevention & Control

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