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coronavirus noun

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co-ro-na-vi-rus | \ kə-ˈrɒ-nə-vi-rəs \ plural **coronaviruses**

Definition of coronavirus

1 : any of a family (*Coronaviridae*) of large single-stranded RNA viruses that have a lipid envelope studded with club-shaped spike proteins, infect birds and many mammals including humans, and include the causative agents of MERS, SARS, and COVID-19

// *Coronaviruses* can cause a variety of illnesses in animals, but in people *coronaviruses* cause one-third of common colds and sometimes respiratory infections in premature infants.

— Rob Stein

// ... in 2003 a previously unknown *coronavirus* caused an outbreak of SARS in humans.

— Ali Moh Zaki et al.

— abbreviation *CoV*, *CV*

2 : an illness caused by a coronavirus

especially : COVID-19

// Italy has seen the most *coronavirus* cases in Europe, with more than 2,000 people ill and 76 deaths associated with COVID-19.

— *Dayton (Ohio) Daily News*

— abbreviation *CV*

Examples of coronavirus in a Sentence

Recent Examples on the Web

// Just weeks into the new school year, both boys tested positive for the *coronavirus*. — *The Washington Post, Arkansas Online*, 13 Oct. 2021

// Just weeks into the new school year, both boys tested positive for the *coronavirus*. — *Gina Harkins, Anchorage Daily News*, 13 Oct. 2021

These example sentences are selected automatically from various online news sources to reflect current usage of the word 'coronavirus.' Views expressed in the examples do not represent the opinion of Merriam-Webster or its editors. Send us feedback.

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First Known Use of coronavirus

1968, in the meaning defined at sense 1

History and Etymology for coronavirus

CORONA + VIRUS, later taken as New Latin

NOTE: The word was introduced by a group of virologists as a short article "Coronaviruses" in the "News and Views" section of *Nature* (vol. 220, no. 5168, November 16, 1968, p. 650): "... avian infectious bronchitis virus has a characteristic electron microscopic appearance resembling, but distinct from, that of myxoviruses. Particles are more or less rounded in profile ... there is also a characteristic 'fringe' of projections 200 Å long, which are rounded or petal shaped, rather than sharp or pointed, as in the myxoviruses. This appearance, recalling the solar corona, is shared by mouse hepatitis virus In the opinion of the eight virologists these viruses are members of a previously unrecognized group which they suggest should be called the coronaviruses, to recall the characteristic appearance by which these viruses are identified in the electron microscope."

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The first known use of coronavirus was in 1968

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coronavirus noun

co-ro-na-vi-rus | \ kə-ˈrɒ-nə-vi-rəs \

Medical Definition of coronavirus

1 : any of a family (*Coronaviridae*) of large, single-stranded, RNA viruses that have a lipid envelope studded with club-shaped spike proteins, infect birds and many mammals including humans, and include the causative agents of blue comb, feline infectious peritonitis, COVID-19, MERS, and SARS

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— Rob Stein, *The Washington Post*

— abbreviation *CoV*, *CV*

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especially : COVID-19 — abbreviation *CV*

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Britannica.com: Encyclopedia article about coronavirus

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Spelling isn't all black and white.

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