

Tip Sheet on the Coronavirus (COVID-19)

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Fast facts on COVID-19

- A respiratory virus transmitted through respiratory droplets (even possibly from the airborne route) from close personal contact with an infected person, or from touching contaminated surfaces then touching your nose/mouth
- Has affected people from all nationalities, races, and genders in over 100 countries around the world
- As of March 9, 2020, 111,397 cases were confirmed worldwide, with 3,892 deaths.
- As of March 9, 2020, there were 423 confirmed cases across 35 states, with 19 total deaths.
- Not currently widespread in the USA, but is anticipated to cause a global pandemic.
- Those at higher risk include older adults, those with chronic illnesses, and healthcare workers exposed to patients with COVID-19; children/teens are less likely to become seriously ill.
- Still many unknowns about transmission; some cases do not have an obvious link to a known case (community-acquired).
- Incubation period (exposure to illness) is 1 – 14 days (with an average of 5 days); quarantine has been 14 days for those exposed.
- Symptoms range in variety and severity, but commonly include: fever, dry cough, tiredness. Some complain of aches and pains, diarrhea, sore throat. About 20% of people show no symptoms, making containment more difficult.
- 80% of persons have a mild case and recover without special treatment.
- About 1 in 5 people with COVID-19 will have a more serious case, with difficulty breathing, and may require hospitalization.
- There is no specific treatment. Treat the symptoms. Rest and fluids are recommended.
- No vaccine yet; it may take 12 – 18 months for a vaccine to be developed and available.
- There are currently no medications to treat the virus.
- There will likely be increased pressure on the healthcare system to manage and contain the virus.
- Special care needs to be taken in long term care facilities and for those who are most vulnerable.

To minimize your risk you *should*:

- Wash hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap, water, and friction (or hand sanitizer with 60% alcohol if soap/water are not available) and always wash your hands well before eating.
- Avoid touching your nose and mouth.
- Cover your mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or sneeze into your elbow).
- Stay home if you are sick; avoid contact with those who are sick, keeping at least a 6 foot distance from those who are coughing to avoid breathing their respiratory droplets.

- Avoid nonessential travel to countries with known outbreaks (China, Iran, South Korea, Italy)
- Keep your environment clean, well-ventilated, and regularly disinfect common surfaces.
- If you have respiratory symptoms that become worse, seek medical attention.
- Reconsider attendance at conferences or meetings in areas of high risk.
- Be aware of areas with higher numbers of cases and avoid unnecessary travel there while the outbreak is still ongoing.
- Be aware that your local public health departments and schools are working hard on management and prevention, so listen to local announcements about avoiding large social gatherings, social distancing (i.e. elbow bumping vs. hand-shaking) or other recommendations.

You should not:

- **Panic.** While a new virus can cause anxiety and upset, using basic common-sense strategies can minimize your risk. So far, the coronavirus is less prevalent than our seasonal flu.
- **Wear a mask.** For the general public, the risk is low, so there is no need for a mask unless you are sick or unless your healthcare provider has recommended it (because you have poor immunity or are at higher risk due to other medical conditions).
- **Be screened for the virus,** unless you have been exposed to someone with the virus, travelled in an area with known cases, or are directed by a healthcare professional to be tested. Testing for COVID-19 is not widely available as of March 5, 2020, even for healthcare professionals, although the vast majority of states in the USA are quickly developing tests and testing protocols.

References/links

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