

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19): What Patients Should Know

A new Coronavirus emerged in Wuhan, China in December of 2019. At that time, it was reported that many of the cases were linked to a seafood and animal market in Wuhan. On February 11, 2020, the World Health Organization announced an official name for the disease that is causing the 2019 novel coronavirus outbreak, COVID-19.

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that usually cause mild respiratory illnesses such as the common cold. Some Coronaviruses have caused more severe illness, such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS). COVID-19 is a new virus that had not been seen in humans prior to December 2019. Worldwide, there have been more than 1000 deaths reported and thousands of cases identified. The first human case in the United States was identified on January 21st in a Washington state resident who had traveled to Wuhan recently. As with any newly emerging infectious disease, information about the disease changes over time. Scientists are currently working to identify the source of the disease, the ways that it spreads and how effectively it can spread from person to person.

How does the COVID-19 coronavirus spread?

- Health officials are still learning the details on how this new virus spread. Other coronaviruses spread from an infected person to others through:
- The air by coughing and sneezing
- Close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes

How severe is COVID-19?

Health experts are still learning about the range of illness from this virus. Cases reported have ranged from mild illness (like a common cold) to severe pneumonia that requires hospitalizations. So far, the deaths from this virus have occurred mainly in older adults who had other health conditions.

What are the symptoms?

People who have been diagnosed with the COVID-19 novel Coronavirus have reported symptoms that may appear in as few as 2 days or as many as 14 days after exposure to the virus:

- Fever
- Coughing
- Difficulty breathing
- Pneumonia

Who is at risk for the COVID-19 Coronavirus?

Currently, the risk to the general public is low. There are a small number of cases in the United States and all those individuals have traveled recently to Wuhan. To minimize the chance of spreading, health officials are working to promptly identify and evaluate any suspected cases. On

January 17, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) began public health entry screening at multiple airports in the U.S. (San Francisco, New York, Los Angeles, Boston and Atlanta) where most travelers from Wuhan, China arrive. Additional airports will be added as needed. Travelers to and from certain areas of the world may be at increased risk. Visit the CDC website for the latest travel guidance.

As of January 27, 2020, the CDC has recommended that travelers avoid all non-essential travel to China. Chinese officials have closed transport within and out of Wuhan and other cities in the Hubei province, including buses, trains and the international airport.

How can I prevent getting COVID-19 novel Coronavirus?

Right now, the COVID-19 novel Coronavirus has not been spreading widely in the United States, so there are not additional precautions recommended for the general public. Steps you can take to prevent the spread of flu and the common cold will also help prevent Coronavirus:

- Stay away from people who are sick. If you are sick, stay home from work and school.
- Do not travel if you are sick.
- Washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds is the best way to prevent the spread of this virus and many other illnesses.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when coughing or sneezing/
- Stay informed on the latest information. Visit the CDC COVID-19 website for more information and the latest updates.

If you have traveled to China, Iran, Italy, Japan, or South Korea in the last 14 days and feel sick with fever, cough or difficulty breathing:

- See your primary care provider right away. Call ahead and tell them about your symptoms.
- Avoid contact with others.
- Do not travel if you are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.

For more information, visit the CDC Novel Coronavirus website: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus

**Last Updated February 28, 2020*