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## 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions

Current as of February 14, 2020

### What is 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)?

A new (novel) respiratory virus first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China.

### What is COVID-19?

On February 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced COVID-19 as the official name of the disease responsible for causing the 2019 novel coronavirus outbreak. The breakdown of this new name COVID-19 is “CO” for corona, “VI” for virus, “D” for disease, and “-19” for 2019. This name now officiates the naming convention for this new virus. We will be updating our website and materials to reflect this updated name.

### How serious is this threat to the public?

It’s important to know that while the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) considers this a serious public health threat, based on current information, the immediate health risk of COVID-19 to the general American public is considered low at this time.

### What is the source of the COVID-19 virus?

The exact source is not yet known; public health officials across the world are working to identify the source of the COVID-19 virus. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses, some causing illness in people and others that circulate among animals, including camels, cats, and bats. Early on, many of the patients in the outbreak in Wuhan reportedly had some link to a large seafood and animal market, suggesting the virus likely emerged from an animal source.

### How does the COVID-19 virus spread?

It is not yet clear how easily the COVID-19 virus spreads from person-to-person. Some viruses are highly contagious (like measles), while other viruses do not spread as easily. It is important to know this in order to better understand the risks associated with this virus. Investigations are ongoing about the transmissibility, severity, and other features associated with the COVID-19 virus.

### What are the symptoms?

Patients infected with the COVID-19 virus have reported mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms that include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Difficulty Breathing



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### How is COVID-19 diagnosed?

Currently, the only way to confirm this disease is to perform laboratory testing at the CDC. Local healthcare providers should coordinate with the local public health department to arrange testing for persons who meet the proper CDC criteria.

The CDC has designated a select number of qualified state and local public health laboratories, Department of Defense laboratories, and international laboratories to receive laboratory testing kits for the 2019 novel coronavirus. Soon more laboratories will have the capacity to detect the COVID-19 virus.

### How is COVID-19 treated?

There is no specific antiviral treatment recommended for COVID-19 infection. People infected with the COVID-19 virus should receive supportive care to help relieve symptoms. For severe cases, treatment should include care to support vital organ functions.

### What can I do to prevent getting COVID-19?

There is currently no vaccine available to protect against COVID-19, but it is recommended for everyone to get their flu vaccine and practice proven and routine preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, including:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

### What do travelers need to know about COVID-19?

[The CDC recommends that travelers avoid all nonessential travel to the People's Republic of China due to the coronavirus outbreak.](#)

In an effort to control the outbreak, many travel restrictions have been implemented; most commercial air carriers have reduced or suspended routes to and from China. In addition, Chinese officials are screening travelers leaving some cities in China. Several countries and territories throughout the world, including the United States, have also implemented health screening of travelers arriving from China.



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To help prevent the spread of novel coronavirus infection in the United States, beginning on February 2, 2020, the CDC began implementing the following measures that include travel restrictions, a federally mandated quarantine and self-monitoring:

- Any U.S. citizen returning to the United States who has been in Hubei Province, China, in the last 14 days will undergo a health screening upon arrival to the country and will be quarantined for up to 14 days to prevent the possible spread of the infection to others.
- Any U.S. citizen returning to the United States who has been in other areas of mainland China within the last 14 days will undergo a health screening upon arrival to the country and will self-monitor their health and avoid public gathering places, including work and school, for up to 14 days to prevent the possible spread of the infection to others.
- Foreign nationals (other than immediate family of U.S. citizens and permanent residents) who have traveled in China within the last 14 days will be denied entry into the United States at this time.

These measures only apply to travelers who returned to the United States after February 2, 2020 More details can be found in the [presidential proclamation](#).

### What is the difference between quarantine and isolation?

Isolation and quarantine are used to protect the public by preventing exposure to infected people or to people who may be infected.

**Quarantine** is used to separate and restrict the movement of people who are well but who may have been exposed to an infectious disease to see if they become ill. These people may have been exposed to a disease and do not know it, or they may have the disease but are not showing symptoms. A quarantine can help limit the spread of infectious diseases.

**Isolation** is used to separate sick people (who have or may have an infectious disease) from people who are healthy. Isolation restricts the movement of ill people to help stop the spread of certain diseases. Isolation typically occurs in a hospital setting but can be done at home (self/home-monitoring) or in a special facility. Usually individuals are isolated, but larger groups can be isolated as well.

### What should I do if I think I have COVID-19?

Based on current information, the CDC is recommending that the following people should contact their healthcare provider immediately to be evaluated for COVID-19:

- Persons who have fever **and** symptoms of lower respiratory illness (such as cough, difficulty breathing) **and** also have traveled from Hubei province, China in the last 14 days before the symptoms appeared



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Current as of February 14, 2020

- Persons who have fever **and** symptoms of lower respiratory illness (such as cough, difficulty breathing) **and** also have had close contact\* with a person who is under investigation for COVID-19 while that person was ill
- Persons who have fever **or** symptoms of lower respiratory illness (such as cough, difficulty breathing) **and** also have had close contact\* with an ill, laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 patient.

If you have traveled to Mainland China within the last 14 days, or had close contact\* with someone who is a confirmed case of COVID-19 or is a person under investigation **and** develop a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness, such as cough or shortness of breath, you should:

- Call a healthcare provider and seek medical advice—It is important that you call ahead before going to a doctor's office or emergency room and tell them about your recent travel or close contact and your symptoms.
- Avoid contact with others—Do not go to work, school, or travel while sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash your hands with soap and water immediately after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

Your healthcare provider will work with the health department to determine if you need to be tested for the COVID-19 virus.

\*Close contact is defined as being within approximately 6 feet (2 meters) of a COVID-19 case for a prolonged period of time.

### What should I do if I think I have been exposed to the COVID-19 virus?

If you have had close contact\* with someone who is confirmed to have, or being evaluated for, COVID-19 infection, you should:

- Monitor your health starting from the day you first had close contact with the person and continue for 14 days after you last had close contact with the person. Watch for these signs and symptoms:
  - Fever of 100.4°F/38°C or higher—Take your temperature twice a day.
  - Coughing.
  - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing.
  - Other early symptoms to watch for are chills, body aches, sore throat, headache, diarrhea, nausea/vomiting, and runny nose.
- If you develop fever or any of these symptoms, call your healthcare provider right away.



LIVEWELLSD.ORG

## 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions

Current as of February 14, 2020

- Before going to your medical appointment, be sure to tell your healthcare provider about your close contact with someone who is confirmed to have or is being evaluated for COVID-19. This will help the healthcare provider's office take steps to keep other people from getting infected. Ask your healthcare provider to call the local or state health department.
- **If you do not have any symptoms**, you can continue with your daily activities, such as going to work, school, or other public areas.

### Should I wear a face mask?

The CDC does not recommend the use of face masks for the **general public** to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Face masks are useful at preventing diseases from spreading when they are worn by people who have symptoms. Masks can help reduce the spread of illness when a sick person coughs or sneezes, this is why people are sometimes asked to wear a mask at a doctor's office or hospital if they are coughing or sneezing. Although there will likely be more cases of COVID-19 reported in the U.S. in the coming days and weeks, there is extremely limited person-to-person spreading of the COVID-19 virus in the U.S., and there is no person-to-person community spreading in the U.S. at this time (The only spread in the U.S. has been between close, personal contacts of travel-related cases from Wuhan, China). The health risk to the general public from this virus remains low.

Risk, however, is dependent on exposure, **healthcare providers** working with patients with confirmed COVID-19 or patients under investigation for COVID-19 in healthcare settings should take the [precautions outlined by the CDC](#), with specific recommendations for personal protective equipment (PPE) including proper use of N-95 respirators.

Most **law enforcement, border protection officers and other workers** are unlikely to need PPE beyond what they would use to protect themselves during routine job tasks. If officers are entering rooms where travelers with suspected COVID-19 have been isolated, such as during augmented (i.e. secondary and tertiary) screening steps, higher-level PPE, including a gown and N-95 respirator may be required.

### Why are we suddenly hearing about the novel coronavirus in the news?

Chinese authorities identified the new coronavirus in December 2019. Since it was identified, thousands of cases have been confirmed, primarily in China, and a growing smaller number of travel-associated cases in other countries, including in the United States. Because this is a rapidly evolving public health situation that we still don't know a lot about, it is being monitored very closely. Health officials are investigating the virus to learn how easily it spreads, the severity of the illness, and medical measures that can be used to control, treat, or prevent the virus.



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### What is the County of San Diego's role in the repatriation flights into Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Miramar?

The County of San Diego is working closely with our federal and state partners to coordinate care for the U.S. citizens that arrived on planes from the Hubei province of China at MCAS Miramar on 2/5/20 and 2/7/20. The federal government is the agency leading this federal quarantine effort.

The County of San Diego is supporting the United States Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Defense in their efforts to monitor and care for these repatriated citizens while remaining dedicated to our foremost priority of assuring the health, security and safety of all San Diego County residents.

### Is there a greater risk for novel corona virus spread in San Diego County now that they have confirmed cases at MCAS Miramar?

To date there have been two confirmed cases of COVID-19 among the repatriated citizens who have been in federal quarantine at MCAS Miramar since their arrival. Any patients under investigation (PUI) or confirmed cases of COVID-19 are being treated according to CDC guidelines which may include hospitalized isolation; all other repatriated citizens are under federal quarantine at MCAS Miramar and undergo daily health screenings. The individuals at Miramar have not had any contact with the general San Diego public.

### What is the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) doing to help prepare for any COVID-19 cases that might occur in San Diego County residents?

Although no COVID-19 cases have been confirmed among San Diego County residents to date, local health officials know that cases could occur at any time. HHS is working with the CDC, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the local medical community and is utilizing standard procedures already in place to isolate, test, and investigate Patients Under Investigation (PUI).

### Where can I find more information about COVID-19?

Please see the following resources for more information about the 2019 novel coronavirus outbreak:

- [County of San Diego Epidemiology Unit 2019 Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) web page: www.coronavirus-sd.com](http://www.coronavirus-sd.com)
- [California Department of Public Health Novel Coronavirus 2019 \(n-CoV 2019\) web page](#)
- [CDC Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) web page](#)
- [World Health Organization Novel Coronavirus web page](#)
- **For general information about the 2019 Novel Coronavirus in San Diego County, call 2-1-1.**