

CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19) UPDATE

WorkPartners OHS

April 11, 2020

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), World Health Organization (WHO), National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)

Substantive changes from the most recent 04/03/2020 update are in blue

WHAT IS CORONAVIRUS?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in people and many different species of animals, including camels, cattle, cats, and bats. Rarely, animal coronaviruses can infect people and then spread between people such as with MERS-CoV, responsible for the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome in 2012, and SARS-CoV, responsible for the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome of 2003-4, and now with this new coronavirus (named SARS-CoV-2). All three of these viruses that can infect people are thought to have their origins in bats.

HOW COVID-19 SPREADS

The virus named SARS-CoV-2 is thought to spread mainly from person-to person via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths and noses of people who are nearby (within 6 feet), or possibly inhaled into the lungs.

It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. The virus is thought to remain viable on surfaces for hours to days, depending on the type of surface and environmental conditions.

People are thought to be most contagious when they have the most symptoms. Some spread might be possible before people show symptoms, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

The virus that causes COVID-19 is spreading easily and sustainably in many regions of the world. There have been over [1.6 million](#) cases reported in over 200 countries and territories, making this outbreak a global pandemic. The United States has now surpassed all other countries in the total number of COVID-19 cases.

COVID-19 is an emerging disease and there is more to learn about its transmissibility, severity, ability to induce immunity, and risk for recurrence of COVID-19.

SYMPTOMS

Reported illnesses have ranged from mild symptoms to severe illness and death. Symptoms include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Elderly persons and persons with underlying medical conditions appear to be at greater risk for severe illness.

CDC believes at this time that symptoms of COVID-19 may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure.

People should call their doctor if they have traveled to high risk regions or have been in contact with a person suspected or known to be infected with COVID-19 within the past 2 weeks and develop symptoms. For a list of the CDC's highest risk regions (level 3 travel warnings), see [CDC Travel Health Notices | Travelers' Health](#).

PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19, and no specific treatment other than supportive care. The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to the virus. This includes everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, including:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- 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 using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if they are visibly dirty.

Face masks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is crucial for healthcare workers and people who are taking care of someone in close settings (at home or in a healthcare facility). [The CDC now recommends that all persons wear cloth face masks while in public and to avoid all public gatherings.](#)

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE SICK

If you develop fever (subjective or confirmed ≥ 100.4 degrees F) and symptoms of a respiratory illness such as cough or shortness of breath, within 14 days after travel to high risk region or after being in close contact with an individual known to have tested positive for COVID-19, you should contact a healthcare professional and mention your recent travel. If you have had close contact with someone showing these symptoms who recently traveled from this area, you should contact a healthcare professional and mention your close contact and their recent travel. Close contact is defined as being within approximately 6 feet of a COVID-19 case for a prolonged period of time, such as while caring for, living with, visiting, or sharing a health care waiting area of room with a COVID-19 case.

If you are sick with COVID-19 or suspect you are infected with the virus you should restrict your activities outside the home, except for getting medical care. Do not go to work, school, or public areas. Avoid public transportation, ride sharing, or taxis. As much as possible, stay in a specific room away from other people in your home. Although there have been no reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19, until more information is known the CDC recommends that people sick with COVID-19 limit contact with animals.

Other precautions are as follows:

- If you have a medical appointment, call the healthcare provider ahead of time and tell them you have or may have COVID-19.
- Wear a facemask when you are around other people or pets and before you enter a healthcare provider's office.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and throw used tissues in a lined trash can.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or clean hands with an alcohol-based sanitizer that contains 60 to 95% alcohol.
- Avoid sharing personal household items such as dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding. After using these items, they should be washed thoroughly with soap and water.
- Clean high touch surfaces every day, including counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables. Use household cleaning spray or wipe, according to the label instructions.
- Seek prompt medical attention if your illness is worsening (e.g., difficulty breathing). Call your healthcare provider before seeking care and tell them you have, or are being evaluated for, COVID-19.

COVID-19 AND PREGNANCY

Current CDC advisory is that they do not currently know if pregnant women have a greater chance of getting sick from COVID-19 than the general public nor whether they are more likely to have serious illness as a result. Pregnant women experience changes in their bodies that may increase their risk of some infections. With viruses from the same family as COVID-19, and other viral respiratory infections, such as influenza, women have had a higher risk of developing severe illness. It is always important for pregnant women to protect themselves from illnesses.

Pregnant women should use the same precautions as the general public. It is not known at this time if COVID-19 would cause problems during pregnancy or affect the health of the baby after birth. It is not known at this time what if any risk is posed to infants of a pregnant woman who has COVID-19. There have been a small number of reported problems with pregnancy or delivery (e.g. preterm birth) in babies born to mothers who tested positive for COVID-19 during their pregnancy. However, it is not clear that these outcomes were related to maternal infection.

In limited studies on women with COVID-19 and another coronavirus infection, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV), the virus has not been detected in breast milk; however it is not known whether mothers with COVID-19 can transmit the virus via breast milk. Whether and how to start or continue breastfeeding should be determined by the mother in coordination with her family and healthcare providers.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTING YOUR FACILITY

The CDC provides everyday steps for cleaning your facility, disinfecting when someone is sick, and other practical considerations for employers [HERE](#).

The San Diego County Public Health Department has provided the following checklist for social distancing and sanitation in businesses that remain open during the pandemic: [SOCIAL DISTANCING AND SANITATION PROTOCOL](#)

WORKPARTNERS TESTING AND TELEMEDICINE

New recommendations by public health officials are that testing be reserved only for the sickest and most vulnerable populations, until such time when tests are readily available. We have therefore delayed implementation of testing at WorkPartners such that those precious resources can be preserved for our frontline healthcare workers in hospitals.

Additionally, given the current delay in receiving test results of 5-10 days, plus the general consensus that a single test may not reasonably exclude the diagnosis, this renders testing in the general population less useful than previously thought. By the time a second result is obtained, a patient is largely outside of the 14 day isolation period. Hence, the current recommendations are that patients with minor symptoms self-isolate for 14 days.

[A new type of test identifying persons that have been exposed to SARS-CoV-2 and thus may have immunity will soon be available, which will likely help in making return-to-work determinations.](#)

[WorkPartners is officially launching telemedicine services on Monday, April 13. This will provide patients an option to obtain their needed medical care without having to go to the medical clinic. We can also utilize telemedicine to provide COVID-19 consultations to assist with the following:](#)

- Evaluation and treatment recommendations for employees with possible COVID-19 exposure or symptoms;
- Assessment of causation as work or non-work related(AOE/COE);
- Referral to a testing center when necessary.

We are confident that you will find our telemedicine COVID-19 assessment service invaluable in receiving the appropriate care and recommendations during this unprecedented crisis. [Setting up a telemedicine appointment can be done through the WorkPartners website, or by calling the clinic.](#)

SITUATIONAL SUMMARY

[There are more than 1.6 million COVID-19 cases worldwide. The US has over 500,000 cases with over 20,000 deaths, more than any other country in the world. Most states, including California, have issued stay-at-home orders with exceptions for obtaining food, medicines, healthcare, and commuting to jobs considered crucial. The CDC now recommends that Americans wear cloth masks while in public. The US is in a phase of rapid rise in the number of COVID-19 cases, although the rate of rise is decreasing in some regions. San Diego County averaged 79 new cases daily over the last week, off from a peak of 146 new cases on 04/02/20. The CDC has expanded its travel advisories to include a recommendation to avoid all nonessential international travel. Persons returning from international travel or cruise ship travel should self-isolate for 14 days upon returning to the US.](#)

