

GENERAL INFORMATION

About COVID – 19 (also referred to as the Coronavirus)

- This is a new virus. Therefore, vaccines are not yet available and may take over a year to develop. The degree of illness varies significantly, some experience symptoms similar to a cold. Others are affected more substantially.
- Globally, the fatality rate is some 7 times higher than the US Seasonal Influenza. However, COVID-19 is about one-third less fatal than SARS and one-tenth as fatal as Ebola.
- Those elderly and suffering from other significant ailments are most susceptible.

Symptoms of COVID-19

- Become familiar with symptoms of COVID-19; it can cause fever, coughing, and shortness of breath. It spreads mainly from droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes but can also spread when someone touches a contaminated object and then touching their face.
- **The virus is very contagious, and some people seem to be able to infect others before they are showing symptoms or even know they're sick:** Researchers currently believe one infected person generally infects two to three others, which would make the new coronavirus more contagious than other coronaviruses, like SARS and MERS.
- **With flu season ongoing, it can take time to identify cases and outbreaks:** So, with symptoms similar to seasonal flu, doctors may not even be thinking of COVID-19 yet when examining a patient, especially in people who haven't traveled to China.
- **Some people may have abdominal pain before respiratory symptoms, which are symptoms not being screened for:** This illness is still very new, so much is not known yet. This means "we may not be detecting cases that do not present in the classic way with fever and respiratory symptoms," said William Schaffner, an infectious disease expert at Vanderbilt University.



CORONAVIRUS 2019-nCoV

SYMPTOMS



FEVER



COUGH



SHORTNESS
OF BREATH



SORE THROAT



HEADACHE

Minimize the Spread

- Employ respiratory etiquette: Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw away the tissue. If you don't have a tissue, cough and sneeze into your elbow. Droplets from sneezes or coughs can travel up to six feet.
- Avoid close personal contact with people who might have been exposed to COVID-19, or even with asymptomatic people in some situations. Instead of shaking hands, use elbows bumps instead.
- Avoid touching your face; viruses can live on surfaces for a few hours up to days.
- **Most importantly: wash your hands regularly for 20 seconds.** The No. 1 thing you can do to avoid getting sick is to regularly wash your hands. This dramatically reduces your chances of transmitting or contracting respiratory and other illnesses, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
 - Proper handwashing technique: lather with a soap of your preference, scrub for 20 to 30 seconds, and don't forget the backs of your hands and in between fingers. If you're not sure how long half a minute is, try spending two seconds washing each finger or singing the Happy Birthday song twice.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available. Rub it in until your skin is dry. However, soap and water are preferred.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Receive a flu vaccine if you are over the age of 6 months.
- Follow the CDC's recommendations regarding the use of facemasks. **Facemasks are not recommended for people who are well to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.** Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 or to help prevent the spread of the disease to others or by health workers and people who are taking care of someone with COVID-19 symptoms.

FOR YOUR WORKPLACE

Preparedness Activities: Organizations

- Develop, train, and exercise disaster plans: infectious disease preparedness and response, Emergency Operations Center (EOC), business continuity, risk communication, social distancing plans with specific triggers for various levels of outbreak, and "back to normal."
- Review emergency response procedures and assess the readiness of executives and the designated command and control system to respond to COVID-19 if needed.
- Ensure that the organization is prepared for an epidemic – staff augmentation, contingency supplies, early acquisition of antivirals and vaccines, and disaster-specific processes.

Guidance for Developing an Infectious Disease Plan

- Include stakeholders from within the organization as well as partner organizations, vendors, emergency response in the jurisdiction, public health, and medical experts.
- Include employee representatives from all levels of the organization in planning efforts.
- Document needed supplies, staff, and space.

- Consider scenarios in which supplies, or staff are low or depleted.
- Identify non-pharmaceutical interventions that can be employed.
- Review current guidelines from the CDC and WHO regarding personal protective equipment (PPE), non-pharmaceutical interventions, and social distancing for various types of infectious diseases.
- Review relevant laws and procedures for various public health control measures and modifying employee work structures.
- Include in the plan the cultural aspects of emergency preparedness and response: open communication, ease of reporting sickness, fear of repercussions for missing work, etc.
- Identify specific triggers for various levels of response.
- Ensure that employees understand the plan and know their role.

Organizational Structure, Roles, Responsibilities during Times of Disaster

- Define a modified organizational structure for times of disaster, including revised roles and responsibilities, back-ups (two or three levels), Infectious Disease Response Manager, and cross-training requirements.
- Define clear decision-making authority during an outbreak or epidemic, which may be different from “blue sky” times.
- Add cleaning rotations during outbreaks, particularly on surfaces that are touched frequently – doorknobs, computers, phones, etc.

Situational Awareness

- Conduct a risk assessment of possible threats to the organization, employees, or community. Identify mitigation strategies that can be implemented. For example, do you have a major meeting or conference coming up? Should you cancel or postpone? If not, what counsel do you have for attendees? (see decision tree).
- Set up processes for maintaining situational awareness of possible threats throughout the year.
- Implement processes for infectious disease surveillance and early identification.
- Regularly review updates on the illness, spread, and prevention measures using the sources provided on the last page.

Supplies

- Ensure that the organization has adequate supplies of tissues, hand hygiene products, cleaning supplies, and masks; these products may be difficult to procure once an outbreak begins, so contingency supplies are advised. Work with multiple suppliers to have adequate supplies.
- Develop a resource management plan, to include: inventory of essential and non-essential supplies; location, quantity, and expiration date for each item; contact people that can use and order supplies; vendors, back-up vendors, and ordering process; process for maintaining the resource plan; and processes for “blue sky” and disaster times.

Flu Shots and Antivirals

- Identify options for employees to get a flu shot each flu season.
- In the event of an outbreak, help employees find ways to get antiviral medication if advised; review benefits policies regarding coverage.

- Consider implementing ways to make it easy to get a flu shot or other medication (leaving work during the day or free/low cost vaccines or antivirals, for example).

Communication, Education, and Alerts

- Establish communication structures specifically for times of disaster: alert color codes and associated actions, a hotline and/or website for updates and answering questions, daily updates to employees.
- Throughout the year and especially during an outbreak, communicate best practices for prevention or containment of any infectious disease and when to seek care.
- Work to establish an open and non-threatening culture of communication, so that signs of sickness can be identified early. Consider the specific needs of the organization and ways to reduce panic.

Alternate HR Policies for Times of Disaster

- Define a separate absenteeism policy that supports staying home if sick during outbreaks.
- Define alternate work arrangements so that employees can work from home.
- Set up a system during outbreaks to monitor staff who are ill or suspected as ill, including contacting staff who are unexpectedly absent from work. Facilitate their return to work after a quarantine or outbreak.

Travel Considerations

- Consider establishing policies for employee travel during the outbreak
- At a minimum, consider restricting travel to those countries or regions designated by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) for warning
- If employees have recently been in areas so designated by the CDC, develop and implement policies encouraging them to avoid interaction with co-workers and others.

Business Continuity Processes and Structures

- Conduct a business impact analysis, which evaluates the effects of an interruption in critical operations; plan for absences of up to 50% during the height of the outbreak.
- Define essential and non-essential processes, core people or skills to keep the organization running, and primary and secondary back-ups. Essential personnel might include emergency operations, custodians (to prevent spread of virus), IT (technology for business continuity solutions), and payroll.
- Evaluate vendors' ability to provide needed resources.
- Define ways to continue essential operations and minimize the economic impact of an outbreak, quarantine, or other disaster-related effects.
- Identify actions to take at various levels of outbreak or impact. Alert or response levels may be based on location of outbreak, transmission rate, number of cases, and fatality rate.
- If the organization has a daycare program, separate any children with symptoms. In higher education institutions, have alternate dorms to house those patients under quarantine or needing isolation.

Guidance for Jurisdictions

- Consider developing Crisis Standards of Care plans.
- Plan for times of scarce resources.
- Develop plans with stakeholders throughout the jurisdiction.

- Ensure that the plans are adopted and approved by all partners.
- Distribute, train, and exercise the plans.
- Ensure that adequate supplies are on-hand and processes exist for acquiring more if needed.
- Document screening algorithms for 911 calls. Ensure 911 call takers have information on how to answer questions and route calls.
- Define alternate levels of response based on the severity of the outbreak.
- Create communications plans for the public, the media, partners, first responders, and others.
- Ensure that communications are reviewed and approved by a centralized group so that there is consistency in the messaging.
- Save all education and communication documents in one place and implement a naming convention for files that allows for easy retrieval and updates.

Partnerships and Mutual Aid

- Consider developing mutual aid agreements with other organizations, private companies, hospitals and other healthcare settings, and public health agencies.
- Establish processes for communicating with local health departments regarding infectious disease risks, precautions to take once an outbreak starts, and cases of suspected flu or other infectious disease.

FOR YOUR HOME AND FAMILY

Preparedness Activities: Personal and Family

- Don't panic. Plan.
- Stock up on nonperishable food, but not all at once. Over the course of a few weeks, think through and buy food items that you and your family enjoy and provide needed nutrition. Empty supermarket shelves can be a common sight in disasters but can also be a source of panic. There may be times when you need to stay inside, either because you or a family member or sick, the easiest thing to do is buy one extra can of [beans or another non-perishable item](#) whenever you can. Health experts haven't definitively said how much food you should stow away, but the CDC says a typical case of flu lasts one to two weeks. The [current quarantine measures](#) for COVID-19 is two weeks, too, based on the longest incubation period of similar coronaviruses. So, having one to two weeks of food stockpiled and ready in case of an emergency is advised.
- In addition to food, stock up on water, prescriptions, over-the-counter medications, hand soap, hand sanitizer, tissues, and other necessities to avoid contact with the general public.
- Get flu and pneumonia vaccines. These shots will not prevent COVID-19 but they may reduce the chances of comorbidity (the simultaneous presence of two chronic conditions or diseases in a patient).
- Continue to learn more about [differences among respiratory illnesses](#) as information becomes available.

Face Masks

- Don't stock up on face masks. Even heavy-duty [N95 face masks alone won't do much](#) to stop viruses from entering your body; air and droplets can find their way around the mask if not fitted to the face, and so wearing these masks may result in a false sense of security. Plus, hoarding masks for yourself may keep them from medical professionals who actually need them as part of their protection as they care for

sick people. If you do get sick, that's when you should consider using a face mask. If you can't stay home and need to go to a doctor or clinic, wearing a mask will help reduce the virus spread. If available, disposable masks may be advised so they can be thrown away.

Personal and Family Emergency Plan

- Make an emergency plan and emergency contact list. Once it has been created, make sure members of your household or family know what they should do in certain situations. The plan may include things like alternate childcare plans for your kids or making arrangements for how to handle school closures. If caring for a sick family member, take precautions to minimize the chance of you getting sick or spreading it further. Stay home if possible (you might be infected), set up a separate room and bathroom for them until they're better, clean the rooms they use daily. Within your community, talk to your neighbors about emergency planning, checking up on people who live alone, and identifying ways to get additional help with health care, information, or resources.

ADDITIONAL SOURCES FOR SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

- [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Situation Summary](#)
- [Situation Reports \(World Health Organization\)](#) - Daily situation reports, including key information, statistics inside and outside of China, technical guidance, and preparedness and response guidance.
- [Interim US Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Persons with Potential 2019 Novel Coronavirus \(2019-nCoV\) Exposure in Travel-associated or Community Settings](#)
- [Planning Guidance and Checklists – Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions \(CDC\)](#) - Guidance regarding non-pharmaceutical interventions, including canceling events if there is a pandemic.
- [“Nonpharmaceutical Measures for Pandemic Influenza in Nonhealthcare Settings—Social Distancing Measures” \(CDC\)](#)
- [World Health Organization: Q&A on Coronaviruses](#)
- [CDC Coronavirus Disease 2019 – How 2019-nCoV Spreads](#)
- [Risk Communication and Community Engagement \(RCCE\) Readiness and Response to the 2019 Novel Coronavirus](#)
- [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to 2019 Novel Coronavirus \(2019-nCoV\), February 2020](#) - includes a “Planning for a Possible 2019-nCoV Outbreak in the US”
- [Communication Resources \(CDC\) – print, videos, and resources for travelers](#)
- [Health Alert Network \(HAN\)](#)
- [2019 Novel Coronavirus \(2019-nCoV\) in the U.S.](#)

QUESTIONS? NEED ASSISTANCE?

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