

## Important Coronavirus Information

March 10, 2020

The US Centers for Disease Control, (CDC), is responding to an outbreak of respiratory disease caused by a new coronavirus first detected in China. It has now been detected in more than 100 locations internationally, including in the United States. The virus has been named *SARS-CoV-2*. The disease it causes has been named *coronavirus disease 2019*, (abbreviated "COVID-19").

According to CDC on March 9<sup>th</sup>, there are 110,000 confirmed cases worldwide. In the USA, 34 states have in excess of 500 confirmed cases with 19 reported deaths. Half of the reported cases are in the states of California and Washington. The immediate risk, however, of being exposed to the virus that causes coronavirus is thought to be low, as there is no widespread circulation in the United States.

A growing number of patients contracting the virus as a result of having contact with an infected person; therefore, physical contact should be as limited as possible.

U.S. COVID-19 cases include:

- imported cases in travelers,
- cases among close contacts of a known case, and
- cases where the source or incident of the infection is unknown.

Some mild symptoms of COVID-19 include a headache or slightly runny nose until recovery. If a person develops a fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, he or she should seek medical care. Reported illnesses have ranged from very mild, including some with no reported symptoms, to severe cases, some resulting in death. A report out of China suggests serious illness occurs only in 16% of cases. Individuals falling into one of the following categories who should be cautious due to elevated risk of exposure and should consider being tested are:

- healthcare workers caring for patients with COVID-19,
- close contact with persons with COVID-19, and
- travelers returning from affected international locations where community spread is occurring.

More cases of COVID-19 are likely to be identified in the US. The CDC states it's possible that widespread transmission of COVID-19 in the United States will occur.

Critical agencies, such as law enforcement, emergency medical services, and sectors of the transportation industry may also be affected. Healthcare providers and hospitals may be overwhelmed and overcrowded. There is currently no vaccine to protect against COVID-19, and no medications approved to treat it. As a result, nonpharmaceutical interventions would be the most important prevention and/or response strategy.

The CDC also recommends the following.

- People at higher risk of serious COVID-19 illness avoid cruise travel and non-essential air travel.

- Older people, and those with severe chronic or underlying health conditions such as heart disease, lung disease, and/or diabetes, should take special precautions since they are at higher risk.
- Healthcare providers should pay special attention to people who recently traveled from China or another affected area and who have symptoms associated with COVID-19.
- Healthcare providers should also be on the lookout for people who have been in close contact with COVID-19 cases *or* patients with pneumonia of an unknown cause.

People having close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 should inform their healthcare providers and describe symptoms and exposure. Since there is currently no treatment for this disease, people mildly ill with COVID-19 who are able to isolate themselves at home are encouraged to follow CDC guidance on how to reduce the risk of spreading the illness to others. Anyone having been exposed to someone with COVID-19 in the last 14 days will face some limitations on movement and activity and should follow CDC and health care provider instructions.

Other precautions to be taken include:

- having enough prescription and over the counter medications on hand,
- thoroughly washing hands with antibacterial soap for at least 20 seconds,
- apply hand sanitizer after contact with others,
- refrain from touching eyes, nose, mouth after having contact with others until after washing hands,
- refrain from touching highly touched/handled public surfaces, and
- stay home as much as possible to avoid crowds and infected individuals.