# Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

# New Coronavirus: What You Need to Know

An outbreak of respiratory illness caused by a novel coronavirus has been identified starting in Wuhan China. Some patients have had mild illness while others have been more severe, and some have died.

The California Department of Public Health understands there are concerns about novel coronavirus, and understandably so. Although coronaviruses are a group of viruses that aren't new, this is a new type of coronavirus and we are still learning about it. However, the health risk to the general public in California remains low.

There is no evidence of sustained person-to-person transmission of the virus in the United States. One instance of person-to-person transmission was confirmed in San Benito County, California, but it was with a close household contact.

This is a serious public health concern. We are actively working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, with local governments and health care providers across the state to protect your health.

As of February 25, 2020, there are 10 cases (including two from separate repatriation flights) of COVID-19 novel coronavirus confirmed in California by CDC lab testing and approximately 200 persons have been tested to date.

- For more information on the travel advisory issued by the U.S. Department of State, please see the China Travel Advisory – January 30, 2020.
- For the latest information on repatriation and federal management, please see this statement from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

# What is COVID-19?

Coronaviruses are a large group of viruses that are common among animals and humans. In rare cases, animal coronaviruses can be transmitted from animals to humans. The novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19 is a newly discovered coronavirus that has not been previously detected in animals or humans. The source of this virus is not yet known.

# What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Typically, human coronaviruses cause mild-to-moderate respiratory illness. Symptoms are very similar to the flu, including:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

In some cases, COVID-19 can cause more severe respiratory illness.

# How is COVID-19 diagnosed?

Health care providers will assess patients, and if COVID-19 is a possible diagnosis, they will do further testing. At this time, the only laboratory testing for COVID-19 is being done at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) laboratory. If a patient is suspected to be infected with the novel coronavirus, public health agencies will work with health care providers to ensure CDC testing can be completed.

## What is the treatment for COVID-19?

Most people with illnesses due to common coronavirus infections recover on their own. There are no specific treatments for coronavirus infection. For patients who are more severely ill, hospitals can provide supportive care. We are continuing to learn more about this novel coronavirus and treatment may change over time.

## How is it decided whether a person with a confirmed case of COVID-19 can self-isolate at home or must be confined to a hospital or elsewhere?

Local health departments are working in partnership with the Public Health Department and CDC, and making determinations on whether a person ill with COVID-19 requires hospitalization or if home isolation is appropriate. That decision may be based on multiple factors including severity of illness, need for testing, and appropriateness of home for isolation purposes.

# What can the public do to limit the spread of COVID-19?

The Public Health Department recommends the public take the following steps to prevent the spread of all respiratory viruses.

- Washing hands with soap and water.
- Avoiding touching eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick are all ways to reduce the risk of infection with a number of different viruses.
- Staying away from work, school or other people if you become sick with respiratory symptoms like fever and cough.

# What is the difference between COVID-19 and other coronaviruses?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. There are some coronaviruses that commonly circulate in humans. These viruses cause mild to moderate respiratory illness, although rarely they can cause severe disease.  These normal human coronaviruses can be identified with widely available laboratory tests.  Those laboratory tests do not identify the novel coronavirus associated

with COVID-19. It is closely related to two other animal coronaviruses that have caused outbreaks in people—the SARS coronavirus and the MERS (middle east respiratory syndrome) coronavirus.

## Is California able to test for COVID-19?

The CDC continues to conduct testing for the virus that causes COVID-19. As of Friday, February 21, 2020 the California Department of Public Health's state laboratory in Richmond is providing limited testing for this virus. The tests are limited to people who are part of federal repatriation efforts in California and suspected of being infected. This means California public health officials will get test results sooner, so that any patients will get the best care.

## What is the state doing to protect our health?

The California Department of Public Health is working closely with CDC to respond to the outbreak of COVID-19. Screening of incoming passengers at two California airports is ongoing: Los Angeles International (LAX) and San Francisco International (SFO). This is to identify people who have symptoms that could be due to COVID-19 so that they can receive appropriate assessment and care. The state Public Health Department is providing information to local health departments and health care providers across

California on how to safely and effectively evaluate ill people who have been to China. The state will continue to monitor the situation, work with partners to identify any possible cases, provide information and consultation to ensure that possible cases are managed safely, support laboratory testing, and implement recommendations from the CDC.

We will continue to monitor the situation and provide updated information to the public.

## Should public events be cancelled?

Is it safe to attend conferences or public meetings in California that may also be attended by foreign travelers? The health risk to the general public in California remains low.

California state and local health officials are actively working to help protect the health of Californians. We understand that some Californians may be concerned about COVID-19. California has a limited number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 and we don't have any indication of it spreading widely in our communities at this time.

The U.S. government has taken unprecedented steps to protect against the spread of COVID-19. On January 31, entry into the United States was suspended for foreign nationals who have been in mainland China within the previous 14 days. U.S. citizens, residents, and their immediate family members who have been in Hubei province and other parts of mainland China

are allowed to enter the United States, but they will be screened, and depending on their assessed risk level, will be subject to health monitoring and possible quarantine for up to 14 days. After the 14 day period with no symptoms, these travelers would no longer be considered a risk to others. These measures are expected to minimize the risk of exposure to COVID-19 associated with travelers who have been invited to attend conferences or public meetings in California.

The Public Health Department is not recommending the cancelation of public events at this time. There is no evidence of sustained person-to-person transmission of the virus in the United States. There have been two instances of person-to-person transmission: one occurred in Chicago, and another in San Benito County, California. Both instances involved a close household contact.