Information on Coronavirus/COVID-19

Updated: 2/28/2020

What’s in the name – COVID-19?

Coronavirus Disease 2019/COVID-19 is the name of the disease caused by the virus SARS-CoV-2. ‘CO’ stands for ‘corona,’ ‘VI’ for ‘virus,’ and ‘D’ for disease.

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2/SARS-CoV-2 is the name of the virus that is causing the COVID-19 disease. As the name indicates, the virus is related to the SARS-associated coronavirus (SARS-CoV) that caused an outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in 2002-2003, however it is not the same virus.

From a risk communications perspective, using the name SARS can have unintended consequences in terms of creating unnecessary fear for some populations, especially in Asia which was worst affected by the SARS outbreak in 2002-2003. For that reason and others, the World Health Organization has begun referring to the virus as “the virus responsible for COVID-19” or “the COVID-19 virus” when communicating with the public. Neither of these designations are intended as replacements for the official name of the virus. (Source: WHO – Naming the coronavirus disease (COVID-2019) and the virus that causes it)

Five facts about Coronavirus/COVID-19

Fact 1: Diseases can make anyone sick regardless of their race or ethnicity. People of Asian descent, including Chinese Americans, are not more likely to get COVID-19 than any other American. Help stop fear by letting people know that being of Asian descent does not increase the chance of getting or spreading COVID-19.

Fact 2: The risk of getting COVID-19 in the U.S. is currently low. Some people who have traveled to places where many people have gotten sick with COVID-19 may be monitored by health officials to protect their health and the health of other people in the community.

Fact 3: Someone who has completed quarantine or has been released from isolation does not pose a risk of infection to other people.

Fact 4: You can help stop COVID-19 by knowing the signs and symptoms:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

Seek medical advice if you have traveled to China in the past 14 days and feel sick. Call ahead before you go to a doctor’s office or emergency room. Tell them about your recent travel and your symptoms.
Fact 5: There are simple things you can do to help keep yourself and others healthy. Please see below.
(Source: CDC – Share Facts, Not Fear)

What could happen if Coronavirus/COVID-19 spreads?

From the CDC: “More cases are likely to be identified in the coming days, including more cases in the United States. It’s also likely that person-to-person spread will continue to occur, including in the United States. Widespread transmission of COVID-19 in the United States would translate into large numbers of people needing medical care at the same time. Schools, childcare centers, workplaces, and other places for mass gatherings may experience more absenteeism. Public health and healthcare systems may become overloaded, with elevated rates of hospitalizations and deaths. Other critical infrastructure, such as law enforcement, emergency medical services, and transportation industry may also be affected. Health care providers and hospitals may be overwhelmed.”

Preventing the spread of diseases

Based on the latest recommendations by the Center on Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and local departments of public health, we offer the following advice to all staff on preventing the spread of all respiratory viruses, including the flu:

• Get a flu vaccine. It’s currently flu and respiratory disease season. Taking flu antivirals if prescribed.
• Washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds.
• Avoiding touching eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
• Stay home if you are sick.
• There is no recommendation to wear mask unless you are sick and need to go out.

Preparing yourself and your family

• Make sure you have a supply of all essential medications for your family.
• Make a childcare plan if you or a caregiver are sick.
• Make arrangements about how your family will manage school closure.
• Make a plan for caring for a sick family member without getting sick yourself.

Planning to travel?

Warning – Level 3: CDC recommends that travelers avoid all nonessential travel to the following destinations:

• China Travel Health Notice (except Hong Kong and Macau)
• South Korea Travel Health Notice

Alert – Level 2: These destinations are experiencing sustained community transmission of respiratory illness caused by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). The virus can spread from person to person. Older adults and those with chronic medical conditions should consider postponing nonessential travel to the following destinations:
Watch – Level 1: CDC does not recommend canceling or postponing travel to the following destinations. Travelers should practice usual precautions.

- Iran Travel Health Notice
- Italy Travel Health Notice
- Japan Travel Health Notice

For the most up-to-date travel information, please visit the following sites:

- CDC information for travelers
- Travel advisories for all countries

Keeping up-to-date

If you need specific information for your county health department, visit California Resiliency Alliance’s webpage and scroll down.

Further reading:


Implications of racism and xenophobia on effective public health response. Washington Post, “The rising panic over coronavirus is likely to make containing it harder.” Panics spread misinformation that make crafting sound medical solutions more difficult, while fueling bigotry.

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