

## NOVEL CORONAVIRUS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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### What is novel coronavirus?

Coronavirus is a type of virus that causes diseases of varying severities, ranging from the common cold to more serious respiratory disease. A novel (new) coronavirus is a new strain of coronavirus that hasn't been identified before in humans. Novel Coronavirus, or COVID-19, is a new respiratory virus first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China.

### How severe is the illness from novel coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). A novel coronavirus is a new strain that has not been previously identified in humans. As with any newly emerging infectious disease, knowledge evolves with time. Early on, it is difficult to know the source of the disease, how effectively it spreads from person to person, and the spectrum of illness – how severe the infection is. These questions are answered over time as investigations provide accurate information. It's not clear how frequently infected people will develop serious illness.

### How does novel coronavirus spread?

Much is unknown about how COVID-19, a new coronavirus, spreads. Current knowledge is largely based on what is known about similar coronaviruses, such as [MERS](#) and [SARS](#). Most often, spread from person-to-person happens among close contacts (about 6 feet). Person-to-person spread is thought to occur mainly via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes, similar to how influenza and other respiratory pathogens spread. It's currently unclear if 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 possibly their eyes. Typically, with most respiratory viruses, people are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest). It's important to note that how easily a virus spreads person-to-person can vary. Some viruses are highly contagious (like measles), while other viruses are less so. There is much more to learn about the transmissibility, severity, and other features associated with COVID-19 and investigations are ongoing. This information will further inform the [risk assessment](#).

### How concerned should people in Orange County, CA be about this novel coronavirus?

At this time the risk to the general public is low as only one case has been identified in Orange County, CA in a traveler from Wuhan. In consultation with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the California Department of Public Health, the OC Health Care Agency (HCA) is following up directly with all individuals who have had close contact with the case and are at risk of infection. As a point of

comparison, in a typical flu season there are hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations and tens of thousands of deaths in the U.S. alone.

## **Can you confirm or deny that the positive novel coronavirus case traveled to a specific location in Orange County, CA (a mall, restaurant, etc.)?**

The HCA's Public Health Services staff and the CDC have evaluated the individual's limited movements in Orange County in the days leading up to his hospitalization, and he has since recovered. The HCA is following up directly with all persons who are considered to be at risk. The HCA has no evidence that the virus is spreading in the Orange County community and the current health risk to the general public is low. Residents should go about their daily lives with no changes to planned activities.

## **What is being done to identify and prevent the spread of novel coronavirus?**

All travelers from China are being routed through designated US airports for screening by the CDC. This process will provide information to travelers returning from areas where the outbreak is occurring on what to do if they develop symptoms. Because it is not possible to identify all people who may be incubating an infection through screening, clinicians and healthcare systems must remain alert and ask persons with respiratory symptoms about their travel history. International travelers should also be aware of this outbreak in China and be sure to review guidance for international travelers from the CDC at: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>. The HCA is working with our healthcare systems to help them detect any infections as quickly as possible.

## **When should you seek medical attention for novel coronavirus?**

Persons returning to the United States from China through select airports and considered to be at highest risk of developing illness are currently being quarantined and monitored by public health officials. Those who undergo a health screening and are deemed to be at a lower risk are being asked by the CDC to voluntarily self-quarantine for 14 days and monitor their symptoms. The HCA is contacting travelers who reside in Orange County, CA upon their return to provide instructions for self-quarantine, and again at the end of their quarantine period.

If you were in China and feel sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing within 14 days after you left China, you should:

- Seek medical care right away. Before you go to a doctor's office or emergency room, call ahead and tell them about your recent travel and your symptoms.
- Avoid contact with others.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds to avoid spreading the virus to others. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.

## **How can I help protect myself?**

There is currently no vaccine to prevent novel coronavirus infection, although scientists at the National Institute of Health reported they are going to take steps towards the development of a vaccine. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to this virus. Right now, novel coronavirus has not been

found to be spreading in Orange County, so there are no additional precautions recommended for residents to take. However, as a reminder, the CDC always recommends everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, including:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- 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.

## **Should I be wearing a facemask?**

Currently, the CDC does not recommend the wearing of masks for the general public; however, it is a common practice in many countries and individuals should exercise personal discretion in their use. A note about face masks: face masks are most useful for preventing disease spread when they are worn by people who have symptoms. This is why people are asked to wear a mask at doctors' offices and hospitals if they are coughing or sneezing. As always, the HCA recommends that persons who are ill stay home to limit transmission of all viruses.

## **What are the treatments for novel coronavirus?**

There is no specific antiviral treatment recommended for novel coronavirus infection. People infected with novel coronavirus should receive supportive care to help relieve symptoms.

## **What does the federal declaration of novel coronavirus as a public health emergency mean?**

On Friday, January 31, 2020, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) declared the novel coronavirus a public health emergency in the United States. The declaration went into effect at 2 p.m. PST on Sunday, February, 2, 2020. As part of the emergency declaration, persons returning to the United States through select airports and considered to be at highest risk are being quarantined and monitored by public health officials. Locally, it's important to note that John Wayne Airport is not among this predetermined list of airports. All other returning travelers from China will face a health screening and face up to two weeks of monitored self-quarantine to ensure they pose no health risk.

## **What is the current case count?**

This information, which can be found on the CDC's website, will be updated regularly on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Please visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-in-us.html>.

For more information, please visit [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html),  
[www.ohealthinfo.com/novelcoronavirus](http://www.ohealthinfo.com/novelcoronavirus) or call the HCA's Health Referral Line at (800) 564-8448.