



---

## **COVID-19 INTERIM GUIDANCE FOR ORANGE COUNTY, CA SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**

---

As many of you are already aware, there is an outbreak of pneumonia in China, which has been identified to be caused by a novel (new) coronavirus, which has been officially named COVID-19 by the World Health Organizations. There are ongoing investigations by many countries to learn more about the outbreak, and the situation is rapidly evolving. On Friday, January 31, 2020, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) declared COVID-19 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 will be 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. At this time, Orange County, CA continues to have only one confirmed case of COVID-19 (a man in his 50s) and there is no evidence of person to person transmission occurring here. The risk to the public in Orange County, CA and throughout the United States remains low. The OC Health Care Agency (HCA) is working with federal, state, and local partners including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), and health care providers to prepare and appropriately care for people who may be at risk for illness associated with novel coronavirus or who have tested positive for novel coronavirus. This is a rapidly changing situation, and we will share more as we are updated from our colleagues at the state and/or federal level. Below you will find information on COVID-19, what the HCA is doing to ensure the safety of residents and health care workers, and actions that can be taken to prevent spread of respiratory illness. Also included is a FAQ sheet for distribution to members in your community.

### **What is novel coronavirus (COVID-19)?**

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that cause diseases of varying severities, ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases, such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). Coronaviruses usually exist exclusively in animals, but some can transmit from animals to humans, and some of those are also transmitted from person to person, while others are not. In general, transmission of

coronaviruses is most likely while a person has symptoms. This is a new virus called a novel coronavirus because it is a new strain of coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans. The symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, and difficulty breathing. Health officials across the world are actively collecting information about clinical manifestations of this new virus and who is at risk for infection.

### **Should schools exclude students who recently traveled from China?**

The CDC asks that healthy travelers self-quarantine for 14 days and students who self-quarantine should be excused from school during this period. The HCA is contacting these individuals upon return to provide instructions for self-quarantine, and again at the end of their quarantine period. Persons identified at highest risk of developing illness are being monitored by federal, state and/or local public health officials. If a high-risk person being monitored is a student, the HCA will exclude them from school for 14 days from their last exposure and will communicate with the school, college or university to assure the student is excluded for the identified period. This is a rapidly evolving situation and as guidance on this subject changes, the HCA will provide updates.

### **Should staff or students wear masks?**

Currently, the CDC does not recommend that the wearing of masks be mandated for staff or students. The wearing of masks is common in many countries, and individuals should exercise their own 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.

### **For school nurses and student health centers, it is recommended that you:**

- Follow standard environmental infection control procedures for healthcare settings.
- When students complain of illness, ask about recent travel to China.
- Post signs that promote standard hygiene practices, such as:
  - Washing hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds.
  - Using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not on hand.
  - Covering the nose and mouth with elbow or a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
  - Avoiding touching eyes, nose, and mouth.
  - Limiting close contact with people who are sick.

### **If you or someone you know has traveled to China and feel sick, please:**

- Stay home and avoid contact with others, except for seeking medical care.
- Seek medical care right away, however before seeking care, call ahead to report recent travel and symptoms.

- Cover mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve (not hands) when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash hands frequently.

### **How is COVID-19 treated?**

There is no vaccine for COVID-19. People who traveled to or from China or were in close contact with someone who was infected and develop a fever and respiratory symptoms within 14 days of their travel or exposure should seek medical care. There is no current specific treatment although scientists are working on testing medication options. Many of the symptoms can be treated, however, and effective treatment is based on the patient's clinical condition.

### **What is the HCA doing in response?**

The HCA will continue coordinating with state and federal public health partners to ensure that travelers from China or people connected with a confirmed case are appropriately screened, tested and receive care. Travelers from China who are not ill are asked to self-quarantine for 14 days and should seek care if they become ill while visiting Orange County, CA. While there is no cure for this virus, our hospital partners and clinical providers will be able to test and care for ill travelers to minimize transmission and severe illness. The HCA issues health advisories informing local healthcare providers in Orange County, CA of the current recommendations and guidance and sends updates as the situation evolves.

---

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. Your collaboration to inform the public and prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus is a valuable component of efforts to effectively protect the Orange County, CA community and keep residents and visitors healthy.

---

## COVID-19 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

---

### What is a 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 COVID-19?

Coronaviruses (CoV) are a family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV). 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 COVID-19 spread?

Initially some patients were linked to a live seafood and meat market in Wuhan, but cases continued to emerge after the market was closed on January 1, 2020. Based on what we know today, COVID-19 can be transmitted from person to person, though it's unclear how easily this virus is spreading between people.

### How concerned should people in Orange County, CA be about COVID-19?

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 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 COVID-19 case traveled to a specific location in Orange County, CA (a mall, restaurant, etc.)?**

Our 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. We are following up directly with all persons who are considered to be at risk. We have 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 COVID-19?**

All travelers from Wuhan 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 COVID-19?**

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.
- Not travel while sick.
- 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?**

Currently, there is no vaccine for this virus or other coronaviruses, 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, COVID-19 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?**

The CDC does not currently recommend the use of face masks among the general public because the virus is not currently spreading in the community in the United States. That said, wearing a face mask would not cause you any harm and is a matter of personal preference. 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 COVID-19?**

There is no specific antiviral treatment recommended for COVID-19 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 COVID-19 to be 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.ochealthinfo.com/novelcoronavirus](http://www.ochealthinfo.com/novelcoronavirus) or call the HCA's Health Referral Line at (800) 564-8448.