

Coronavirus

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to more severe respiratory diseases such as the newly noted COVID-19. Its definitive origin is still being researched.

How Coronavirus Spreads

As in influenza, the coronavirus is a respiratory-borne infection. This means that when an infected person coughs or exhales, droplets of infected fluid are released into the air or fall on nearby surfaces and objects. These infected droplets are spread when:

- A person breathes in droplets coughed out or exhaled by an infected person;
- A person touches contaminated surfaces or objects (desks, phones, tables, etc.), and then touches his/her eyes, nose or mouth.

Symptoms and Risk of Coronavirus

Most people infected with coronavirus experience mild symptoms and recover. However, some go on to experience more serious illnesses and may require hospital care. Risk of serious illness increases in people over 50, people with weakened immune systems, and people with conditions such as diabetes, heart and lung disease.

- Common signs of infection include fever, cough, fatigue/muscle aches, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. Symptoms are similar to pneumonia, however they can rapidly progress and do not respond to typical treatments.
- About 80% of people infected will have a mild form of coronavirus and will recover. In about 15%, more severe symptoms develop such as pneumonia and shortness of breath. About 5% will have critical symptoms including respiratory failure, septic shock and multi-organ failure. About 1-2% of these cases result in death.
- A vaccine is anticipated to be available in 12-18 months.

Prevention of Infection Protocol *(implemented for the duration of coronavirus concerns/flu season)*

- **Avoid unnecessary travel to areas that are experiencing outbreaks**
Why? This will limit any potential exposure to areas with identified illness.
- **Wash your hands frequently**
Why? Washing your hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand gel kills viruses that may be on your hands.
- **Maintain a distance** of at least 3 feet between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing
Why? When someone coughs or sneezes, you could breathe in the infected droplets.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth**
*Why? Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses which can enter the body through your eyes, nose and mouth. *If you touch any of these areas, wash hands/use hand gel ASAP.*
- **Cover your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze;** if you use a tissue, dispose of it immediately and wash your hands/use hand gel ASAP.
NEVER USE YOUR HAND TO COVER A COUGH OR SNEEZE!
Why? Respiratory droplets spread virus.
- **Housekeeping/cleaning** At least daily, wear disposable gloves to wipe down common areas such as desks, telephones, computer stations, dining room tables/chairs, door knobs, elevator buttons, chapels, common area bathrooms, etc. with bleach wipes using a back and forth motion. Housekeeping staff or designated community member to complete.
Why? It is possible for the virus to remain viable anywhere from 5 hours up to 9 days.
- **Onset of symptoms** (usually 4-5 days after exposure to the virus) – if you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical care right away.
Why? Early identification of illness helps prevent the spread of the virus and other infections.

Protocol for Use of Masks

- Authorities indicate that a medical face mask is ONLY to be worn by a person with respiratory symptoms.
- People without illness are NOT to wear masks unless they are providing direct care to individuals with respiratory symptoms/illness.

Protocol for Possible Coronavirus Infection

- Seek immediate medical attention if symptoms develop to receive diagnosis and treatment recommendations. Coronavirus symptoms may be similar to influenza which has an available treatment to minimize the symptoms if taken at onset of illness.
- Update your local superior and Mary Balistreri, RN Director of Healthcare Services regarding onset of any respiratory illnesses.
- Self-isolation is required for the duration of illness/recovery to prevent spread to others. Isolation timelines vary for different illnesses - please seek guidance from the Director of Healthcare Services.
- In isolated rooms, keep windows open to allow for a well-ventilated area.
- Meals to be served for isolated individual in their room by dietary staff or other designated community member, until isolation precautions are lifted. Gloves to be worn when removing soiled dishes from room and transporting to kitchen for washing.
- Laundry to be done by housekeeping staff or designated community member, until isolation precautions are lifted. Gloves to be worn for retrieval of soiled linen/clothes until placed in washer.
- Upon recovery, housekeeping staff to wear disposable gloves to thoroughly clean room and wash all bed linens.