



Coronavirus (COVID-19) Preparedness and Risk Mitigation

MARCH 2020

A Resource Guide for Employees

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

The Coronavirus is a respiratory illness first detected last December in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. It has since spread to countries across the globe. Common signs of infection include respiratory symptoms, fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties, according to the World Health Organization. It can also lead to pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure, and possible death.

This is a rapidly evolving situation. Updates are available on the [CDC website](#).

What are the symptoms of the Coronavirus infection?

Patients with confirmed COVID-19 have had mild-to-severe respiratory illness. Symptoms including fever, cough and shortness of breath may appear 2-14 days after exposure. In more severe cases, pneumonia develops, which may make it difficult to breathe.

What is the risk of the Coronavirus infection spreading in the United States?

At this time, the virus is NOT currently spreading widely in the United States. Most people in the United States will have little immediate risk of exposure to COVID-19. Call your healthcare professional if you develop symptoms and have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19 or if you recently traveled from an area with community spread of COVID-19.

How does the virus spread?

This virus is believed to have emerged from an animal source but can now spread from person-to-person. It is currently unclear how easily or sustainably this virus is spreading between people. Coronaviruses generally spread

by respiratory droplets generated when a sick person coughs or sneezes. Coronaviruses may survive on surfaces that have been contaminated with respiratory secretions. (For example, a sick person coughs on their hand and then touches a doorknob.) Thus, contaminated surfaces may be another, less common, route of transmission.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has prepared a list of registered antimicrobial products that can be used against the Coronavirus. The list can be located on USI's Coronavirus web page, or accessed by visiting the EPA site at: https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-03/documents/sars-cov-2-list_03-03-2020.pdf

Are some people more susceptible to getting the Coronavirus (COVID-19)?

We do not know enough about the virus to determine this. However, older people with chronic medical problems and people with compromised immune systems may be more susceptible to severe disease and death based on preliminary reports.

Coronavirus vs. the flu: which is a greater threat?

To date, there have been very few cases of COVID-19 in the United States. In contrast, there have been at least 15 million flu illnesses reported in the U.S. since the start of flu season in October 2019.

What is the main concern with this virus?

Health experts are concerned because we still do not have complete information on how the virus behaves and the full spectrum of the disease. This information will become clear over time as scientists investigate further.

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What do experts know so far about the severity of the illness caused by COVID-19?

Most reported cases have been mild (similar to a cold). However, some cases have resulted in severe pneumonia that requires patients to spend time in a hospital, and a small proportion of victims have died. We currently do not know enough about the illness to predict who will develop more severe disease, but current data indicate that older age and underlying disease (COPD, diabetes, immunosuppression, etc.) may be risk factors.

What should I do if I had close contact with someone who has COVID-19?

If you are not ill but had contact with a person confirmed to have COVID-19, notify your doctor, who will work with public health staff to determine whether you can be cared for at home. If it is determined that you can be isolated at home, you will be monitored by staff from your local or state health department.

Can I get COVID-19 from packages or products shipped from China or other affected countries?

In general, because of poor survivability of Coronaviruses on surfaces, there is a very low risk of spread from products or packaging that are shipped over a period of days or weeks at ambient temperatures. Currently, there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 associated with imported goods, and there have not been any cases of Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the U.S. associated with imported goods.

What about animals or animal products imported from China or other affected countries?

The CDC does not have any evidence to suggest that animals or animal products imported from China or other affected countries pose a risk for spreading COVID-19 in the U.S.

COVID-19 is dominating news cycles and social media. How worried should I be?

As this situation evolves, businesses and individuals are encouraged to keep track of events via reliable news sources – the CDC or World Health Organization (WHO), for example. Unfortunately, a lot of misinformation can be spread, causing unneeded anxiety. Taking steps to prevent the spread of common respiratory viruses, such as the flu, will also help to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Can the virus spread before symptoms present?

There is some concern that COVID-19 can be spread prior to the development of symptoms, but this has not been confirmed. Other viruses, like influenza, can sometimes be transmitted for 24 to 48 hours before symptoms develop. However, in general, symptomatic persons are a much more important source of transmission.

What should I do if I have a cold or flu-like symptoms?

At the present time, unless you have traveled to China or other affected areas or have been in close contact with someone who has traveled to affected areas, your risk is low. You should take care of yourself by getting plenty of rest, drink fluids, take acetaminophen or ibuprofen for aches, pains or fever, and avoid going out in public. (Stay home from work or school.) If you develop signs of more serious illness – difficulty breathing, for example – you should promptly seek medical attention. Many medical facilities are asking that you call ahead so they can be prepared to take you in as you arrive at the facility and minimize the risk of infecting others.

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Why is there so much attention on COVID-19 when influenza kills thousands every year?

New diseases, because of some degree of ambiguity, always generate more concern. We don't pay as much attention to illnesses such as influenza, even though it results in 25,000 to 50,000 deaths per year in the U.S., because we know what to expect and have become accustomed to yearly influenza epidemics.

■ **Basic hygiene will be essential.**

Be prepared to help those at home and at work practice good hygiene all the time. For helpful suggestions, see the following sections of this Guide:

- “Stopping the Spread of Germs”
- “Coronavirus Preparedness: Supplies for an Extended Stay at Home.”

In addition, see the CDC website for hygiene-related materials. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/factsheets.html>

■ **Additional prevention measures include:**

- Get a pneumonia shot to prevent secondary infection if you are over the age of 65 or have a chronic illness such as diabetes or asthma. For specific guidelines, talk to your health care provider or contact your local City or County Health Department.
- Make sure that your family's immunizations are up to date.

What types of issues may arise in a Coronavirus?

It is important to know that a Coronavirus pandemic is different from other public health emergencies or community disasters.

- **A Coronavirus pandemic involving community spread could arrive with very little warning.**
 - Outbreaks may include “waves” of COVID-19 that last for several weeks separated by months.
 - The effect of Coronavirus on individual communities could be relatively prolonged (weeks to months) in comparison to disasters of shorter duration.
 - Outbreaks can be expected to occur simultaneously throughout much of the U.S., preventing sharing of resources that usually occur in response to other disasters. Localities should be prepared to rely on their own resources to respond.
- Public health officials will not know how severe a Coronavirus will be until it begins.
- Because of widespread susceptibility to this Coronavirus strain, the number of persons affected may be high.
- Health care workers and other first responders will be at higher risk of exposure and illness than the general population, further straining the health care system.
- Effective preventive and therapeutic measures, including vaccine and antiviral agents, are likely to be delayed and in short supply.

It is vital to consider health issues that could arise. If a Coronavirus pandemic occurs, it could affect you and your loved ones. Create a family emergency health plan using information available from the CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/get-your-household-ready-for-COVID-19.html>

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

- **Social disruption may be widespread.**

Plan for the possibility that usual services may be disrupted. These could include services provided by hospitals and other health care facilities, banks, stores, restaurants, government offices, and post offices. Transportation systems and basic services, such as water, power, gas, and telecommunications may be limited or interrupted.

- **Consider how to care for people with special needs.**

In case the services they rely on are not available, plan for how you will care for loved ones — possibly in your home.

- Talk with your older relatives' elder care facilities and/or service organizations about their Coronavirus preparedness plans.

- **Schools may be closed for an extended period.**

Plan home learning activities and exercises. Have books and learning materials on hand. Also plan recreational activities that your children can do at home. Talk with school administrators and your parent-teacher organization about your school's plans and discuss how you can work together to help provide support for at-home learning, (e.g., web-based and email-based education, and educational resources on the Internet).

Does the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) apply for employees, or immediate family members, who may contract Coronavirus?

Yes. Assuming that the FMLA applies to the employer, Coronavirus would qualify as a “serious health condition” under FMLA, allowing an employee to take FMLA leave if either the employee or an immediate family member contracts the disease. The employee would be entitled to job reinstatement as well. State law may provide additional leave benefits.

GUIDANCE AND ADVICE TO SHARE WITH EMPLOYEES

How Germs Spread

Illnesses like the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and colds are caused by viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. These viruses usually spread from person to person when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

How to Help Stop the Spread of Germs

- Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue and then throw it away.
- Cover your mouth with your upper sleeve if you do not have a tissue, then clean your hands every time.

Clean Your Hands Often

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water; rub your hands vigorously together and scrub all surfaces. Wash for 15 to 20 seconds. It is the soap combined with the scrubbing action that helps dislodge and remove germs.
- When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel hand sanitizers may be used. You can find them in most supermarkets and drugstores. If using a gel, rub the gel in your hands until they are dry. The gel doesn't need water to work; the alcohol in the gel kills germs that cause colds and the COVID-19.

Avoid Touching Your Eyes, Nose, or Mouth

- Germs are often spread when people touch something that is contaminated with germs and then touch their eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs may live for a long time (some can survive for 2 hours or more) on surfaces like doorknobs, desks, and tables.

Stay Home When You are Sick

- When you are sick or have COVID-19 symptoms, stay home, get plenty of rest, and check with a health care provider as needed. A doctor's note may be required for an excused absence. Common symptoms of the COVID-19 include:
 - Fever
 - Headache
 - Fatigue
 - Cough
 - Sore throat
 - Runny or stuffy nose
 - Shortness of breath
 - Pneumonia may develop in more severe cases.
- Remember: When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick.

Teach Children About Hygiene

- Teach your children to wash their hands frequently with soap and water and model the correct behavior.
- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues and to wash their hands every time. Be sure to model that behavior.
- Teach your children to stay away from others as much as possible if they are sick. Stay home from work and school if sick.

CORONAVIRUS PREPAREDNESS: SUPPLIES FOR AN EXTENDED STAY AT HOME

During a widespread disease event, you may not get to a store. If stores are out of supplies, it will be important for you to have extra supplies on hand. Some items may become scarce, even in advance of an actual community Coronavirus event. During a severe event there may be power outages and interruptions in other basic services such as gas and water. Store a two-week supply of water and food.

Water

- Store one gallon of water per person per day (two quarts for drinking, two quarts for food preparation/sanitation).
- Store water in plastic containers such as soft drink bottles. Do not use juice or milk containers as they may harbor bacteria even after being washed.

Food

Store at least a two-week supply of non-perishable food. In addition, you may not be able to cook if you are ill. Select foods that require no refrigeration, minimal preparation or cooking, and little or no water. Try to avoid very salty foods, as they will increase thirst. Include a selection of the following foods in your home:

- Vitamins
- Foods for infants, elderly persons or persons on special diets
- Ready-to-eat canned meats, fish, beans, fruits and vegetables
- Canned juices, milk, soup (if powdered, store extra water)
- Staples: sugar, salt, pepper

- High energy foods: peanut butter, jelly, nuts, trail mix, dried fruits, protein bars, fruit bars
- Dry cereals, crackers, granola bars, pasta
- Comfort/stress foods: cookies, hard candy, sweetened cereals, lollipops, instant coffee, tea bags (remember to limit these and maintain a healthy diet)
- Pet food

Tools and Supplies

- Paper cups, plates and plastic utensils
- Battery-operated radio and extra batteries
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Cash
- Non-electric can openers (2)
- First-aid manual and home-based Coronavirus guidelines

Hygiene and Sanitation

- Toilet paper, towelettes
- Tissues
- Soap and alcohol-based (60-95%) hand wash
- Liquid detergent
- Plastic garbage bags, ties (for personal sanitation uses)
- Paper towels
- Plastic bucket
- Disinfectant and disinfectant wipes (for phones and surfaces)
- Household chlorine bleach
- Latex gloves

CORONAVIRUS PREPAREDNESS: SUPPLIES FOR AN EXTENDED STAY AT HOME

Special Items

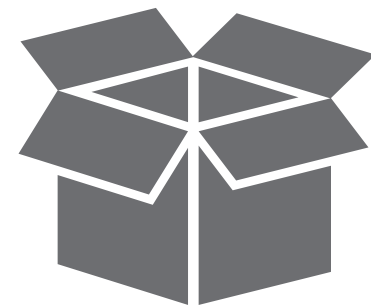
Note: all prescription and over-the-counter drugs must be kept up to date.

- For Babies/Small Children
 - Formula and baby food
 - Diapers, wipes and ointment
 - Pacifiers
 - Extra bottles and bottle brushes
 - Powdered milk/long shelf-life milk
 - Infants' or children's pain reliever/fever reducer (acetaminophen and/or ibuprofen)
 - Children's anti-diarrhea medication
 - Pediatric electrolyte-replacement
 - Thermometer
- For Adults
 - Essential prescription medications
 - Prescribed medical supplies such as glucose and blood-pressure monitoring equipment
 - Basic toiletries
 - Feminine hygiene supplies
 - Pain reliever/fever reducer (acetaminophen and/or ibuprofen)
 - Anti-diarrhea medication
 - Thermometer
 - Contact lens supplies

■ Entertainment and Education.

You may be home for a long time. Even if power is on, you may need to get away from the news and media occasionally. Keep spirits up with old-fashioned (nonelectrical) games for children and adults:

- Extra arts-and-crafts supplies, pens, pencils, and paper
- Activity/puzzle books
- Educational workbooks and basic textbooks
- Books and magazines on a variety of topics
- Board games, playing cards
- Hobby supplies



MINIMIZING FEAR & ANXIETY ABOUT A POSSIBLE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Tips for Employees:

- **Familiarize Yourself with Expert Coronavirus Preparedness Information.**
 - It may seem overwhelming at first but being prepared can actually reduce anxiety.
 - Knowing where to turn for reliable, up-to-date information can make you feel more in control and less fearful.
- **Contain Exposure to Media.**
 - Too much “news” and media-hype may increase your anxiety and be difficult for children to handle. Instead, seek reliable and helpful information.
- **Get Prepared at Home.**
 - Review the section entitled “Coronavirus Preparedness: Supplies for an Extended Stay at Home” and get prepared, not only for a possible Coronavirus emergency, but for other types of emergencies as well.
 - Talk with your children’s schools or childcare centers, and your adult loved ones. Caregivers, service organizations, or residential facilities about what they are doing to prepare. Discuss how you can work together to prepare.
 - Many people find that getting prepared is a constructive way of focusing their fears or anxious feelings about a threat.
 - Feeling powerless ultimately feeds anxiety. Feeling empowered can help ease anxiety and stress.