

Fact sheet:

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Current as of March 2, 2020

What it is

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness which was first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China.

How it spreads

The CoVID-19 virus is spread from person-to-person, although the CDC does not yet know how easily it is spread between people.

The scope of the problem

- COVID-19 has spread to other countries, with significant outbreaks in South Korea and sustained cases of community transmission in Iran, Italy and Japan, according to the CDC.
- There are more than 81,000 confirmed cases worldwide and more than 2,800 deaths.
- There have been 60 confirmed cases in the United States.
- No one in Pennsylvania has tested positive for COVID-19.

How Penn State Health is Prepared

- With guidance from the Milton S. Hershey Medical Center, designated an Ebola Treatment Center, our health system has plans in place to manage patients with special illnesses while safeguarding patients, hospital visitors, health care workers and the community at large.
- Travel screenings are in place for all intake staff to identify higher risk patients.
- If a patient tests positive for the illness, the appropriate protocol is already in place, including approved rooms dedicated for COVID-19 admissions.
- Penn State Health has distributed personal protective equipment and patient hygiene kits to all clinic and practice sites.
- Penn State Health continues to monitor the availability of additional PPE in the event that more supplies are needed.

- Penn State Health is closely monitoring COVID-19 illness as well as developments in its diagnosis and treatment.

What the Public Should Do

- Because it is currently the cold and flu season, the CDC recommends getting the flu vaccine if you have not already. Influenza symptoms can mimic COVID-19 symptoms.
- Individuals should continue to exercise standard safety measures, including not touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after using the bathroom; use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available. (In most circumstances, alcohol-based hand sanitizers are highly effective alternatives to soap and water for health care providers in the workplace.)
- Do not go to work if you are sick and do not send your children to school if they are sick.
- If you are sick and have traveled to a region where COVID-19 is spreading, or have been in contact with someone suspected of having COVID-19, call your health care provider immediately for recommendations on how best to be evaluated; do not go to a hospital, urgent care site, or outpatient clinic without calling ahead to report your travel history.

The Symptoms

The main symptoms of the illness include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. The symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as many as two weeks after exposure.

Severity of the illness

COVID-19 can cause severe illness in some people, including death, although, based on preliminary information, the World Health Organization has stated that a large majority (82%) of COVID-19 cases have been mild; approximately 3% have been critical.

Treatment and Prevention

- There is currently no vaccine available for COVID-19. Vaccine development is in progress.
- There is currently no specific antiviral treatment recommended for COVID-19. Research studies assessing potential treatments are in progress.

Current CDC Travel Warnings

- The CDC has issued travel warnings to U.S. residents, recommending that all travelers avoid all nonessential travel to China, Iran, Italy and South Korea.
- Additionally, the CDC is advising that older adults and those with chronic medical conditions consider postponing nonessential travel to Japan, as that country is experiencing sustained community spread of COVID-19.
- Before traveling to any country, the CDC advises that you visit [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html) to see the current risks and advisories.

Current Penn State Health Travel Advisory

- Penn State Health strongly discourages employees from traveling to any CDC Warning level 3 and Alert level 2 country. This is a rapidly evolving situation; additional countries may be added to the CDC travel advisory list as circumstances change.

For Additional Information

- ~~Visit the [Special Pathogens infonet page](#).~~
- Penn State is actively monitoring COVID-19 and has a helpful [website](#) for faculty and students.
- Visit the [CDC website](#) for updates on COVID-19 including current travel warnings and alerts.