NOVEL CORONAVIRUS 2019 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is Coronavirus Disease 2019?

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which is a new virus strain that hasn't been identified before in humans. It was first identified when it caused an outbreak of respiratory illness in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in 2019.

How severe is COVID-19?

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). As with any newly emerging infectious disease, knowledge about COVID-19 is evolving with time. At this point, it is clear that the virus can pass person-to-person and cause severe disease.

How does novel coronavirus spread?

Current knowledge of how SARS-CoV-2 spreads is largely based on what is known about similar coronaviruses, such as MERS-CoV and SARS. Most often, spread of these viruses from person- to-person happens among close contact (within about 6 feet for a prolonged period). 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. With most respiratory viruses, people are thought to be most contagious when they are the sickest. Research to clarify the transmissibility, severity, and other features associated with COVID-19 is ongoing. This information will further inform the risk assessment.

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

At this time, the risk to the general public is low. As a point comparison, in a typical flu season there are hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations and tens of thousands of deaths in the U.S. alone.

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

Because travel to China is the highest risk level, 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 China on what to do if they develop symptoms. Because COVID-19 is spreading to other countries, it is not possible to identify all people who may be incubating an infection through screening, and 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 and be sure to review COVID-19 guidance for international travelers from the CDC at: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html 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?

If you feel sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing within 14 days after you traveled to a country with widespread sustained transmission of COVID-19, you should:

- Seek medical care. 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.

Visit the CDC website that identifies the Risk Assessment Level for affected countries, https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html.

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.

How do I get tested for COVID-19?

The OC Health Care Agency's Public Health Services team currently arranges testing with each individual's health care provider and/or hospital once they've met specific criteria established by the CDC (that criteria is currently as follows, and may change: persons with fever or lower respiratory illness who has had close contact with a COVID-19 patient within 14 days of symptom onset; persons with fever and lower respiratory illness requiring hospitalization with a history of travel from affected geographic areas within 14 days of symptom onset; and persons with fever and severe respiratory illness requiring hospitalization which is otherwise unexplained). Walk-ins to our public health clinics will not be accommodated for testing.

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 does the County Health Officer's declaration of a local health emergency due to COVID-19 actually mean?

On February 25, 2020, the Orange County Board of Supervisors declared a local emergency and County Health Officer Dr. Nichole Quick declared a local health emergency as part of broader preparedness efforts related to novel coronavirus, or COVID-19.

These actions will help ensure that the County of Orange's ability to respond to a potential outbreak, should one occur, will remain flexible and can evolve as this rapidly changing situation does.

It is important that you also understand what these actions do not mean:

- Orange County does not have a COVID-19 outbreak at this time.
- The OC Health Care Agency is not recommending changes to routine, everyday activities.
- The OC Health Care Agency is not recommending cancelling or avoiding social outings or public events.

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.

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