COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus)

What is Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)?

Coronaviruses are a large group of viruses that are common among animals and humans. This novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19 is a newly discovered coronavirus that has not been previously detected in animals or humans. The source of this virus is not yet known.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Typically, human coronaviruses cause mild-to-moderate respiratory illness. Symptoms are very similar to the flu, including:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- COVID-19 can cause more severe respiratory illness.

COVID-19 in California by the Numbers:

As of March 10, 2020, 7 a.m. Pacific Time, there are a total of 177 positive cases and three deaths in California: 24 cases are from repatriation flights. The other 153 confirmed cases include 55 that are travel related, 40 due to person-to-person transmission, 32 are community acquired and 26 are from unknown sources. Of all the confirmed positive cases:

- **Age 0** – 17: 3 cases
- **Age 18** – 64: 104 cases
- **Age 65**+: 67 cases
- **Unknown**: 26 cases

Approximately 11,000 people are self-monitoring, across 49 local health jurisdictions, after returning to the U.S. from travel.

How can people protect themselves?

Every person has a role to play. So much of protecting yourself and your family comes down to common sense:

- Washing hands with soap and water.
- Avoiding touching eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue or your elbow.
- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick.
- Staying away from work, school or other people if you become sick with respiratory symptoms like fever and cough.
- Following guidance from public health officials.

Who is at Higher Risk for Serious Illness from COVID-19?

Early information out of China, where COVID-19 first started, shows that some people are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. This includes:

- Older adults
- Individuals with compromised immune systems
- Individuals who have serious chronic medical conditions like:
- Heart disease
- Diabetes
- Lung disease

If you are at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19 because of your age or health condition, it is important for you to take actions to reduce your risk of getting sick with the disease, including:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing, or having been in a public place.
- Avoiding touching eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick, and stay away from large gatherings and crowds.
- Stay home as much as possible. Consider ways of getting food brought to your house through family, social, or commercial networks.

It is also important that you listen to public health officials who may recommend community actions to reduce potential exposure to COVID-19, especially if COVID-19 is spreading in your community.

What should you do if you think you're sick?

Call ahead: If you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, and may have had contact with a person with COVID-19 or recently traveled to countries with apparent community spread, call your health care provider or local public health department first before seeking medical care so that appropriate precautions can be taken.

Contacting local public health officials in advance will make sure that people can get the care they need without putting others at risk. Please be sure to tell your health care provider about your travel history. As stated above, you can also take the following precautionary measures: avoid contact with sick individuals, wash hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.

How is it decided whether a person with a confirmed case of COVID-19 can self-isolate at home or must be confined to a hospital or elsewhere?

Local health departments are working in partnership with the California Department of Public Health and the CDC, and making determinations on whether a person ill with COVID-19 requires hospitalization or if home isolation is appropriate. That decision may be based on multiple factors including severity of illness, need for testing, and appropriateness of home for isolation purposes.

Should I wear a mask?

The California Department of Public Health, along with the CDC, does not recommend that healthy people wear masks at this time. However, masks are recommended to limit the spread of disease for people who are exhibiting respiratory symptoms.

Do we have any confirmed COVID-19 cases in Kern County?

From the Kern County Public Health Services Department: There are **no** confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), the illness caused by the novel coronavirus, in Kern County. The risk of COVID-19 in Kern County, California, and the United States remains low. There is no recommendation for the general public to wear facemasks to protect themselves from exposure to the novel coronavirus. Facemasks may be appropriate for persons experiencing

respiratory symptoms to limit the spread to others, or for healthcare providers in contact with ill patients. Novel coronavirus is not in our community now, but may be in the future. However, influenza (flu) **IS** circulating in our community and is currently a greater cause of illness and mortality.

More Information

Public: For more information on COVID-19, please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html

Coronavirus News Releases: For the latest information on the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV), please see our News Releases page:

https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/OPA/Pages/New-Release-2020.aspx

Kern County Public Health Services Department: https://kernpublichealth.com/2019-novel-coronavirus/