

Thank you for your inquiry regarding coronavirus infection. Listed below are responses to frequently asked questions regarding novel coronavirus called COVID-19.

## **Disease Basics**

### **What is novel coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19)?**

COVID-19 was first described in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China and has spread within China and many other countries. COVID-19 refers to the illness caused by the virus SARS-CoV-2.

### **How does the virus spread?**

This virus likely originated from an animal source but now is spreading between people. At this time, it's unclear how easily this virus is spreading between people. When person-to-person spread occurs with other coronaviruses, it mainly happens when an infected person coughs or sneezes and their respiratory droplets come into contact with the eyes, nose, and mouth of other people who are nearby, similar to how influenza and other respiratory pathogens spread. It is unknown if this virus can spread from asymptomatic carriers.

### **What are the symptoms of COVID-19?**

Patients with this virus have had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms that can include:

- Fever, cough, shortness of breath

The majority of patients with COVID-19 are mild. A smaller percentage of cases are severe and can involve pneumonia. Patients who are elderly or have underlying medical conditions seem to be at higher risk for severe infection.

### **Who is at higher risk of getting very sick from COVID-19?**

Older adults and those with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of getting sick from COVID-19.

For comprehensive information refer to the CDC guidance for these populations:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>

## **Public Health Response and Current Situation**

### **Have there been COVID-19 cases in the United States?**

Yes. The first case of COVID-19 in the United States was reported on January 21, 2020. Many cases of COVID-19 have happened in people with travel to higher risk areas or with known contact with someone with COVID-19. Some cases of COVID-19 have occurred in patients with no travel or high risk contacts.

The current count of cases of COVID-19 in the United States is available on the Center for Disease Control's (CDC's) webpage: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-in-us.html>

### **Will more people in the U.S. be affected by COVID-19?**

COVID-19 is able to spread from person-to-person.

China, South Korea, Japan, Iran, and Italy have sustained COVID-19 transmission.

The CDC continues to closely monitor the situation. This is a rapidly evolving situation and information may change daily. The latest updates are available on the CDC's website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

### **What is the significance of the recent COVID-19 cases in patients with no history of high risk travel or other risk factors?**

Though information is limited on these COVID-19 cases, they are concerning for community transmission.

This is a rapidly evolving situation and information may change daily. The latest updates are available on the CDC's website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

### **Prevention**

#### **How do I protect myself against COVID-19?**

Unlike influenza, there is no vaccine to prevent COVID-19 infection.

The best way to prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, including COVID-19, is to avoid exposure. The CDC recommends general preventive measures to prevent the spread of respiratory infections:

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Do not come to work, stay home and do not travel when you are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and throw the tissue in the trash. Then wash your hands with soap and water.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Additional information on prevention measures can be found here ([Prevention for 2019 Novel Coronavirus](#)).

#### **Should I start wearing a mask when I'm at work or out in public?**

The CDC and San Francisco Department of Public Health do not recommend that people who are well wear facemasks to protect themselves from respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19.

If you are sick you should cover your mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, throw the tissue in the trash, and then wash your hands. Those with symptoms can wear a mask covering their nose and mouth when around other people.

#### **Will I be safe in the hospital if UCSF Health is treating proven or suspected COVID-19 patients?**

UCSF Health cares for patients with complex health conditions and has expertise in treating patients with infections and in infection prevention and control.

Our infection prevention practices and protocols are aimed at protecting our faculty, employees and contractors, as well as other patients and visitors.

Any patient with respiratory symptoms is immediately given a mask to wear as a way to contain their respiratory secretions and to prevent spread of infection to others. It is important to remember that this virus is not currently widely spreading in communities in the United States.

Between our campuses at Parnassus and Mission Bay, we have over 40 special isolation rooms that can be used to safely isolate and care for patients with COVID-19. We also have the ability to adapt additional rooms and hospital areas to care for larger numbers of patients if needed.

### **Are there travel precautions?**

Travel advisories are in flux as information on COVID-19 infection evolves.

Currently, for all individuals the CDC recommends avoiding non-essential travel to China, South Korea, Italy, and Iran.

For older patients or patients with chronic medical conditions the CDC recommends avoiding cruise ship and non-essential travel

Check the State Department and CDC travel websites listed below for the most current recommendations: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>

### **Special Populations**

#### **What should I do if I am an older adult or a someone with a chronic medical condition?**

If you are at higher risk of getting very sick from COVID-19, you should:

- Stock up on supplies
- Take everyday precautions to keep space between yourself and others
- When you go out in public, keep away from others who are sick, limit close contact and wash your hands often
- Avoid crowds as much as possible
- Avoid cruise travel and non-essential air travel
- During a COVID-19 outbreak in your community, stay home as much as possible to reduce your risk of being exposed

For more detailed information please refer to the CDC website:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>

Additionally, you should follow general prevention measures:

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Do not come to work, stay home and do not travel when you are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and throw the tissue in the trash. Then wash your hands with soap and water.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

## **Patients taking immunosuppressive medications**

### **I am taking medications that suppress my immune system. Do I need to take special precautions?**

Based on experience with other viral respiratory infections it is possible that COVID-19 will be more severe in the immunosuppressed population.

Immunosuppressed patients should follow the following precautions:

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Do not come to work, stay home and do not travel when you are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and throw the tissue in the trash. Then wash your hands with soap and water.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Avoid crowded public spaces staying at least 6 feet away from persons coughing or appearing ill.

Additional measures include:

- Stock up on supplies
- Take everyday precautions to keep space between yourself and others
- Avoid cruise travel and non-essential air travel
- During a COVID-19 outbreak in your community, stay home as much as possible to reduce your risk of being exposed

For more detailed information please refer to the CDC website:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>

### **Should I continue to take my immunosuppressive medications?**

- Continue to take your immunosuppressive medications if you are well.
- If you are sick with fever or respiratory symptoms, contact your provider for guidance on continuing your immunosuppressive medications.

### **Will donor organs be safe?**

Organ procurement organizations will screen donors for exposure and symptoms. Potential donors with suspected COVID-19, or contact with someone with COVID-19, will not be pursued. Donors with exposure risk and no symptoms may be considered on a case-by-case basis. This is a rapidly evolving situation and these guidelines may change in response to new information.

### **Will living organ donation be safe?**

Living donors with travel to a high-risk area in the last 14 days should be deferred until 14 days from travel. Potential living donors can be advised to not travel to areas where local transmission is occurring and to report new onset cough and flu-like symptoms. Routine testing

of living and deceased donors for COVID-19 is not suggested at this time. This may change over time as the situation evolves.

### **HIV positive patients**

#### **I am HIV positive. Do I need to take special precautions?**

Currently there is little experience with COVID-19 in HIV positive patients. It is possible that HIV positive patients will be more susceptible to COVID-19 and have more serious disease. All HIV positive patients should follow guidelines to decrease their chance of COVID -19 infection:

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Do not come to work, stay home and do not travel when you are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and throw the tissue in the trash. Then wash your hands with soap and water.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Additional measures include:

- Stock up on supplies
- Take everyday precautions to keep space between yourself and others
- Avoid cruise travel and non-essential air travel
- During a COVID-19 outbreak in your community, stay home as much as possible to reduce your risk of being exposed

For more detailed information please refer to the CDC website:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>

#### **I am HIV positive. Do I need to contact my physician to obtain an extended supply of my antiretroviral medications?**

Currently there are no expected medication shortages and obtaining an extended supply of antiretroviral medications beyond 90 days is not recommended.

### **Pregnant patients**

#### **I am pregnant. Do I need to take special precautions?**

Currently there is no published scientific reports about susceptibility of pregnant women to COVID-19. Pregnant women experience immunologic and physiologic changes which might make them more susceptible to viral respiratory infections. It is possible that pregnant women will be more susceptible to COVID-19 and have more severe infection. Pregnant women should follow the same precautions for non-pregnant patients:

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

- Do not come to work, stay home and do not travel when you are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and throw the tissue in the trash. Then wash your hands with soap and water.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

### **Are pregnant women with COVID-19 infection at increased risk of adverse pregnancy outcomes?**

We do not have information on adverse pregnancy outcomes in pregnant women with COVID-19. Pregnancy loss, including miscarriage and stillbirth, has been observed in cases of infection with other related coronaviruses [SARS and MERS] during pregnancy. High fevers during the first trimester of pregnancy can increase the risk of certain birth defects.

At this time, there is no information on long-term health effects on infants either with COVID-19, or those exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19 in utero. In general, prematurity and low birth weight are associated with adverse long-term health effects.

### **Can pregnant women pass the virus to their baby during pregnancy and delivery?**

The virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly by close contact with an infected person through respiratory droplets. Whether a pregnant woman with COVID-19 can transmit the virus that causes COVID-19 to her fetus or neonate by other routes of vertical transmission (before, during, or after delivery) is still unknown. However, in limited recent case series of infants born to mothers with COVID-19 published in the peer-reviewed literature, none of the infants have tested positive for the virus that causes COVID-19. Additionally, virus was not detected in samples of amniotic fluid or breastmilk.

### **Can nursing women pass the virus to their baby during breast feeding?**

In limited studies on women with COVID-19 and another coronavirus infection, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV), the virus has not been detected in breast milk; however we do not know whether mothers with COVID-19 can transmit the virus via breast milk.

The CDC recommends that a mother with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should [take all possible precautions](#) to avoid spreading the virus to her infant, including washing her hands before touching the infant and wearing a face mask, if possible, while feeding at the breast. If expressing breast milk with a manual or electric breast pump, the mother should wash her hands before touching any pump or bottle parts and follow [recommendations](#) for proper pump cleaning after each use. If possible, consider having someone who is well feed the expressed breast milk to the infant: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/pregnancy-guidance-breastfeeding.html>

## **Children**

### **Are children more susceptible to the virus that causes COVID-19 compared with the general population and how can infection be prevented?**

No, there is no evidence that children are more susceptible. In fact, most confirmed cases of COVID-19 reported from China have occurred in adults. Infections in children have been reported, including in very young children. From limited information published from past Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV) and Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) outbreaks, infection among children was relatively uncommon.

Children should engage in usual preventive actions to avoid infection, including cleaning hands often using soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer, avoiding people who are sick, and staying up to date on vaccinations, including influenza vaccine.

### **Does the clinical presentation of COVID-19 differ in children compared with adults?**

Limited reports of children with COVID-19 in China have described cold-like symptoms, such as fever, runny nose, and cough. Gastrointestinal symptoms (vomiting and diarrhea) have been reported in at least one child with COVID-19. These limited reports suggest that children with confirmed COVID-19 have generally presented with mild symptoms, and though severe complications (acute respiratory distress syndrome, septic shock) have been reported, they appear to be uncommon.

### **Are children at increased risk for severe illness, morbidity, or mortality from COVID-19 infection compared with adults?**

There have been very few reports of the clinical outcomes for children with COVID-19 to date. Limited reports from China suggest that children with confirmed COVID-19 may present with mild symptoms and though severe complications (acute respiratory distress syndrome, septic shock) have been reported, they appear to be uncommon. However, as with other respiratory illnesses, certain populations of children may be at increased risk of severe infection, such as children with underlying health conditions.

### **Are there any treatments available for children with COVID-19?**

There are currently no antiviral drugs recommended or licensed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for COVID-19. Clinical management includes prompt implementation of general health care settings [recommended infection prevention and control measures](#) in healthcare settings and supportive management of complications. See more information on CDC [Clinical Guidance for COVID-19](#).

Children and their family members should engage in usual preventive actions to prevent the spread of respiratory infections, including covering coughs, cleaning hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer, and staying up to date on vaccinations, including influenza.

## **Medical Information**

### **What to do if you develop symptoms of respiratory infection?**

If you have fever and cough follow the steps below to help limit spread of infection to people in your home and community

- Stay home except to get medical care. You should not go to work, school, or public areas.
- Separate yourself at home as much as possible from family and pets.
- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
- Wear a mask to cover your nose and mouth if you have cough and are around other people in your home or in public.
- Wash your hands after touching your face, before eating, after using the bathroom. If soap and water is not available, use hand sanitizer with >60% alcohol.
- Avoid sharing personal household items.

- Clean all high touch surfaces every day such as counters, tabletops, doorknobs, phones, keyboards. Use a household cleaning spray or wipe according to label instructions.
- Monitor your symptoms. If you feel your symptoms are worsening contact your healthcare provider.
- Check the CDC website for additional information:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/steps-when-sick.html>

### **Who should be medically evaluated for COVID-19?**

If you develop fever or symptoms of respiratory illness such as cough or shortness of breath and you are in one of the following groups with a higher risk of COVID-19 exposure or complicated infection you should contact your health care provider for guidance on evaluation.

- Travel within the last 14 days to China, South Korea, Japan, Italy, Iran, Seattle or have been a passenger on a cruise ship
- Close contact with someone that has been to these areas or has been diagnosed or is under investigation for COVID-19
- Older individuals or a chronic medical condition

You may also call the **UCSF coronavirus information line at 415 514 7328.**

### **Can I be tested for COVID-19?**

Travel to areas with COVID-19 transmission and contact with a known COVID-19 case remain the prominent risk factor for contracting COVID-19.

Testing for COVID-19 is now available at UCSF on a limited basis. We currently prioritize testing for hospitalized patients given the limited testing availability.

Criteria that are incorporated in the decision to test include travel exposure, contact with a COVID-19 case, or severe respiratory illness requiring hospitalization.

### **Is there treatment for COVID-19?**

Currently most patients with COVID-19 will not require treatment. For the minority of patients that become more ill, therapy is supportive. At this time, there is no specific treatment for COVID-19. Studies are under way to test antiviral medications and work is in progress to develop a vaccine.