



# *Safety Alert*

SA #20-01 (**REVISED**)

January 29, 2020

## **2019 Novel Coronavirus**

Public health officials – including the World Health Organization, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and our local Health Departments – are closely monitoring an outbreak of a respiratory illness caused by a novel (new) coronavirus (termed “2019-nCoV”) that was first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China and reported in December 2019. Infections with 2019-nCoV are being reported in a growing number of countries across the world, including five confirmed cases in the United States, all of whom have had recent travel to China.

2019-nCoV is a new virus that has not been previously identified by public health officials. As a coronavirus, it comes from a large family of viruses, some causing illness in people and others that circulate among animals.

Symptoms of 2019-nCoV can include fever, cough and shortness of breath. Symptoms may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure. If you experience symptoms, do not wait to visit your doctor and follow their instructions.

### **How Can You Protect Yourself and Your Family?**

There is currently no vaccine to prevent 2019-nCoV infection. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to this virus. However, the CDC recommends everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses like 2019-nCoV, as well as influenza and the common cold, 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.
- Cough and sneeze into your elbow, not your hand. Alternatively, cough or sneeze into a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash, and wash your hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces such as keyboards, mobile telephones and steering wheels.

Metro has convened the Pandemic Task Force to monitor and respond to the situation. We are working closely with health officials including the DC Health Department and the CDC.

We will continue to provide updates to employees.

Employees who have additional questions or concerns should refer to the CDC web site at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV>.

# Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) and You



## What is 2019 novel coronavirus?

The 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) is a new virus that causes respiratory illness in people and can spread from person-to-person. This virus was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China.

## Can people in the U.S. get 2019-nCoV?

This 2019-nCoV virus does seem to be able to spread from person-to-person although it's not clear how easily this happens. Person-to-person spread in the United States has not yet been detected, but it's likely to occur to some extent. At this time this virus is not spreading in the United States so the likelihood of someone in the U.S. getting sick with this virus is very low. Right now, the greatest risk of infection is for people in Wuhan or people who have traveled to Wuhan and less so, other parts of China. CDC continues to closely monitor the situation.

## Have there been cases of 2019-nCoV in the U.S.?

Yes. The first infection with 2019-nCoV in the United States was reported on January 21, 2020. The current count of cases of infection with 2019-nCoV in the United States is available on CDC's webpage: [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-in-us.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-in-us.html)

## How does 2019-nCoV spread?

The exact way the virus is spread is not fully known. With similar coronaviruses (MERS and SARS) person-to-person spread is thought to have happened mainly via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes, similar to how influenza and other viruses that cause respiratory illness spread. There also may be some spread when a person touches a surface or object that has virus on it and then touches his or her own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes. Spread of SARS and MERS between people has generally occurred between close contacts. There is much more to learn about 2019-nCoV and investigations are ongoing.

## What are the symptoms of 2019-nCoV?

Patients with 2019-nCoV have reportedly had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of:

- fever
- cough
- shortness of breath

## What are severe complications from this virus?

Many patients have pneumonia in both lungs.

## How can I help protect myself?

- This virus is not spreading in the United States right now, but the best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to this virus. There are simple everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses. These include:
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- 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.

## If you are sick, to keep from spreading respiratory illness to others, you should:

- 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.

## What should I do if I recently traveled to China and got sick?

If you were in China within the past 14 days and feel sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, you should get medical care. Call the office of your health care provider before you go and tell them about your travel and your symptoms. They will give you instructions on how to get care without exposing other people to your illness. While sick, avoid contact with people, don't go out and delay any travel to reduce the possibility of spreading illness to others.

## Is there a vaccine?

There is currently no vaccine to protect against 2019-nCoV. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to this virus.

## Is there a treatment?

There is no specific antiviral treatment for 2019-nCoV. People with 2019-nCoV can seek medical care to help relieve symptoms.

[www.cdc.gov/nCoV](http://www.cdc.gov/nCoV)