Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) Q&A

What is coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)?
COVID-19 is caused by a new respiratory virus. In December 2019, the virus began circulating in humans. Health experts are concerned because little is known about this new virus and it has the potential to cause severe illness and pneumonia.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?
Symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure to the virus. They include:
- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of Breath

Reported illnesses have ranged from mild symptoms to severe illness and death.

How does COVID-19 spread?
Health experts are still learning about how this new coronavirus spreads. The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person:
- Between people who are in close contact (within about six feet) of an ill person, and
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
- It also may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it, then touching their mouth, nose or eyes.

Should I be concerned about getting COVID-19 from products or packages shipping from China or other parts of the world?
In general, coronaviruses are unable to survive on surfaces. There is likely a very low risk of spread from products or packages shipping over a period of days or weeks at ambient temperatures. Currently, there is no evidence to support transmission associated with imported goods.

How can I protect myself from getting COVID-19?
If you are traveling overseas follow the CDC's guidance at CDC.gov/Travel.

There are steps you can take to prevent spread of flu and the common cold that will also help prevent COVID-19, including:
- Wash your hands with soap and water
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or upper sleeve when coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home if you are sick and contact your healthcare provider.

Right now, there are no additional precautions recommended for the general public in the United States.

It is important to remember that stigma and discrimination occur when people associate an infectious disease, such as COVID-19, with a population or nationality. COVID-19 does not target people from specific populations, ethnicities, or racial backgrounds.

Should I wear a mask to protect myself from getting COVID-19?
No. Facemasks are not recommended for healthy people. Facemasks should be used by:
- Healthcare workers
- People taking care of someone with COVID-19

If you are sick with respiratory illness and visit a healthcare provider, you may be asked to wear facemask during your visit.

Should I be concerned about my pets or other animals and COVID-19?
To date, CDC has not received any reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19. At this time, there is no evidence that companion animals including pets can spread COVID-19. However, since animals can spread other diseases to people, it's always a good idea to wash your hands with soap after being around animals.

Are there any cases of COVID-19 in Michigan?
At this time, there are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Michigan.

Information about the number of persons under investigation (PUIs) and specimens tested is updated daily at Michigan.gov/Coronavirus. Also available are the total number of people who may have been exposed to the virus who are referred to local public health for monitoring or assessment.

What does it mean if someone is being monitored for COVID-19?
Public health monitors the health of people who could have been exposed to the virus.

MDHHS is receiving daily referrals about travelers from the CDC airport quarantine stations. Once MDHHS receives the referral, the information is provided to the local health department in the jurisdiction where the traveler resides. Local health department staff contact the individual, assess their risk and supervise daily for health monitoring (temperature, cough, difficulty breathing) for 14 days after their last day of exposure.

There is information summarizing the number of individuals referred to Michigan's public health network for monitoring or assessment available at Michigan.gov/Coronavirus.

Has anyone been quarantined?
To date, no one has been placed in a quarantine facility in Michigan because the screening process has not identified any individuals as being at "high risk" of infection. Some individuals have been asked to self-quarantine in their own homes based on their risk of exposure.

Where is or are the quarantine facilities?
At this time, we are not releasing the locations of quarantine facilities due to individual privacy.

What determines if someone is tested for COVID-19?
Testing is dependent on the current status of COVID-19 in local communities, as well as the course of illness. Clinicians will work with the local health department to determine if testing is warranted.

Criteria may change as we understand more about COVID-19.

Can my healthcare provider test for COVID-19?
Healthcare providers collect the specimen to be tested should an individual meet the testing criteria. The CDC has tested samples from Michigan (all were negative). As of Feb. 27, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Bureau of Laboratories can also perform the test.

Do health workers know how to take samples correctly from patients?
Sample collection for COVID-19 is similar to procedures that hospitals and healthcare workers follow for respiratory viruses. MDHHS Bureau of Laboratories (BOL) have developed kits and guidance to ensure proper collection and shipping of samples.

Why is it important to have quarantine and isolation measures for the COVID-19 outbreak?

- The COVID-19 outbreak has caused very severe illness in some individuals.
- There is no approved vaccine or medication to treat COVID-19 patients.
- Isolation and quarantine efforts seem to have reduced new COVID-19 transmission in other countries.

What is Michigan doing to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Michigan?
MDHHS began working with local health departments, healthcare coalitions, hospital and healthcare partners when the novel coronavirus outbreak began in Wuhan, China. Initial focus was working with federal partners to ensure that Michigan's public health system could support traveler screening and monitoring to limit the entry of cases into the U.S.

Hospitals and healthcare partners were also engaged to establish screening procedures for any patients presenting for care with a travel history and symptoms that could be indicative of a possible COVID-19 case. These activities have mirrored much of the public health response to recent Ebola outbreaks.

While MDHHS was implementing those activities, there has been considerable effort put into planning for the next phase of this outbreak which would include community mitigation.

- On Feb. 3, MDHHS activated the Community Health Emergency Coordination Center to coordinate with local health departments.

- On Feb. 28, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer activated the State Emergency Operations Center to help coordinate the state's response.

What is community mitigation?

Community mitigation activities are routinely utilized on a small scale by public health when responding to outbreaks. This may be a public health response to a chicken pox outbreak in a school or school district, or visitor restrictions in hospitals during flu season.

Community mitigation uses a variety of non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) to limit the spread of the virus.

> **Personal NPIs** are everyday preventive actions, such as staying home when you're sick, covering coughs and sneezes and washing your hands. These actions can help keep yourself and others from getting and spreading respiratory illnesses like the flu.

> **Community NPIs** are policies and strategies such as school closures and dismissals, postponing social gatherings and social distancing (telecommuting). Organizations and communities can put these strategies into place to help slow the spread of illness during an infectious disease outbreak.

> **Environmental NPIs** include routine surface cleaning that helps to eliminate the virus from frequently touched surfaces and objects, such as toys, refrigerator handles, desks, and doorknobs in homes, childcare facilities, schools, workplaces, and other settings where people regularly gather.

In weekly, routine calls with local health departments and healthcare partners, MDHHS has been working to transition our preparedness and response toward community mitigation. MDHHS staff and administration will continue to work with our state partners to implement community mitigation strategies in response to the COVID-19 outbreak as needed. This is a similar approach as was taken in 2009 in response to the Pandemic Influenza H1N1.

Are there systems in place to warn of a potential outbreak early on?

Michigan has a surveillance system to detect cases and clusters associated with an infectious disease outbreak as reported by healthcare providers, emergency departments and local health departments. Also, emergency medical service (EMS) agencies are working closely with MDHHS to report and investigate clusters of respiratory illness requiring EMS transfers to hospitals. These systems are reviewed daily to warn of potential outbreaks of illness, including COVID-19.

Do healthcare workers have the necessary training and equipment to keep them safe?

MDHHS provided guidelines and recommendations for safety measures, including the proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE), to healthcare providers, facilities, and EMS agencies. MDHHS is working to obtain additional supplies, including PPE for healthcare workers, to support an outbreak response and healthcare operations in Michigan.

Is Michigan's healthcare system ready to treat patients with severe or critical disease?
Currently, there are no therapeutics to treat COVID-19, only supportive care. Healthcare providers are prepared to provide supportive care to COVID-19 patients. MDHHS provides updates to healthcare providers to ensure they are equipped with the most current guidance. MDHHS maintains a cache of vital medical equipment that can be deployed to healthcare organizations if necessary.

Are schools preparing for the community spread in Michigan?
MDHHS and Michigan Department of Education (MDE) issued recommendations for public and nonpublic schools and libraries. School districts were asked to review considerations including:
- Reporting influenza-like activity, absenteeism, and potential school dismissals.
- Educating students, staff, and the community about COVID-19 and how to prevent spread.
- Reviewing current dismissal policies, including employment stipulations for staff.
- Planning for impact to meal programs if school day, sport, or gathering cancelations are necessary.
- Coordinating with local health departments on decisions to exclude a student or staff member, or to close schools altogether.

Should I be concerned about my student returning to college after spring break?
Students who traveled during spring break should contact their university's travel office. Many universities have restricted travel to certain parts of the world. This means your student might be asked to remain off campus until 14 days after they returned to the U.S. and are symptom free.

What actions should businesses take to prepare for community spread of COVID-19?
Employers should consider strategies to prevent spread of illness in the workplace including:
- Encouraging sick employees to stay home and ensuring that policies are consistent with public health guidance.
- Separating employees with acute respiratory illness.
- Routinely clean frequently touched surfaces.
- Provide information to employees before traveling.

Employers should follow the CDC's guidance for creating an infectious disease outbreak response plan.

Are there things that should be done when planning large community events?
Event organizers and staff should prepare for the possibility of outbreaks in their communities and consider preparing an emergency plan. CDC has developed recommended actions for preventing the spread of COVID-19 at mass gatherings and large community events.

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COVID-19 Information Updates:
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: CDC.gov/Coronavirus
Michigan Department of Health and Human Services: Michigan.gov/Coronavirus

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