

28 January 2020

Dear parents,

The CDC and State and Bay Area public health departments are closely monitoring developments regarding an outbreak caused by a novel (new) coronavirus first identified in Hubei Province, China. The first case in the United States was announced on January 21, 2020 in the State of Washington. Public health departments are working to identify anyone who might be infected to prevent further spread of the outbreak. San Mateo County residents are at low risk of becoming infected.

When new viruses surface, there can be lots of anxiety and stress. It's important to stay informed. We acknowledge the impact that the news of this outbreak is having on our community, and on those who have friends or relatives who are affected.

What you need to know

- If your child has traveled from Hubei Province, China, within the last 14 days and has any of these respiratory symptoms (fever, cough, or shortness of breath), keep your child home from school contact your health care provider, who will reach out to San Mateo County Health if the case warrants. It's important to call your health care provider in advance, before arriving at a clinic or doctor's office.
- If your child has traveled to China but is not showing any symptoms, they should attend school.

We encourage you to work with your family to take common-sense precautions to prevent the spread of all infectious diseases, including common illnesses like colds and flu

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Wait for 24 hours after a fever has ended – without the use of fever-reducing medicine – before sending your child back to school.
- Have your child and other family members wash their with liquid soap and water, rubbing them for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching your face, particularly your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Teach and encourage proper cough etiquette in your household – cough or sneeze into a tissue, sleeve, or arm (do not use hands).
- Consider not attending large gatherings, as this is where cold, flu, and other respiratory viruses often spread.
- Get your flu shot to protect against the flu, which can produce symptoms similar to novel coronavirus.



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San Mateo County Health has a webpage dedicated to novel coronavirus at www.smchealth.org/coronavirus. We will monitor the developing situation and inform you of any additional public health recommendations. An FAQ is included below.

[Novel Coronavirus Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#)

What is happening?

There has been an outbreak of a new illness called “novel coronavirus.” While the illness started in China, the situation is quickly changing.

What do we know about novel coronavirus?

People with the virus have been confirmed in a number of countries including China, Vietnam and the United States. Since this virus is very new, health authorities are carefully watching the situation and how this virus spreads. This situation is quickly changing, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides updated information as it becomes available.

What is San Mateo County Health doing?

Public health officials are taking action to protect the public by working closely with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO). This situation is quickly changing, and the CDC will provide updated information as it becomes available.

Is my family at risk of getting novel coronavirus?

At this time, there is low risk to Bay Area residents, unless they recently traveled to Hubei Province or were in close contact with someone who was ill who recently traveled in that area.

What should I do now to protect my family?

- Get your flu shot to protect against flu or symptoms like the ones for the novel coronavirus.
- Wash your hands with liquid soap and water, rub for at least 20 seconds.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, sleeve or arm. Do not use your hand.
- Stay home if you are sick with a fever, cough, shortness of breath and are feeling tired.
- Try staying away from large groups of people.
- For people who are traveling to Wuhan: www.cdc.gov/travel/notices/alert/novel-coronavirus



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Should we avoid going to public events?

Flu and other respiratory viruses are very common right now, and large group gatherings are places where viruses can spread. Remember, if you are not feeling well or are experiencing cold, flu or other symptoms, stay home to avoid spreading germs.

What happens if someone has traveled to China and they are now sick?

In the unusual event that a child or staff member is identified who recently traveled from Hubei Province, China and has symptoms of respiratory illness, they should be sent home from school/work and they should contact their primary care provider.

What are symptoms of novel coronavirus?

Symptoms may include fever, fatigue, cough, runny nose or shortness of breath. Some people may have pneumonia or more serious illness.

I'm sick. How do I know if it is coronavirus or something else, like the flu?

If you have traveled to Hubei Province, China in the last 14 days or have been in close contact with someone who has been there and have cold or flu symptoms, please contact your primary care provider.

How is novel coronavirus spread? Are my children and family at risk?

It is unclear how easily or frequently the virus may spread from person to person, so it's important to practice good hygiene (cover your cough and sneeze, and wash hands frequently with soap and water or alcohol based sanitizer). We are still learning about this new virus.

Should we cancel travel plans to Asian countries?

At this time, the CDC has issued a Level 3 travel advisory, recommending to avoid all nonessential travel to Hubei Province, China. Please check the CDC website for current advisories to other countries: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/

I'm feeling stressed and overwhelmed, whom can I talk to?

For information, referrals, and assessments for local mental health and substance use services, please call Behavioral Health and Recovery Services' ACCESS Call Center at (800) 686-0101.

For 24/7 confidential crisis support from local/national organizations, call (650) 579-0350 or 1-800-273-TALK (8255). Chat online: text "START" to 741741.