

**Frequently Asked Questions
2019 Novel Coronavirus
February 28, 2020**

What is a coronavirus? What is the 2019 novel coronavirus? How is it different from other coronaviruses?

Four types of human coronaviruses cause the common cold in humans. However, there are other coronaviruses that infect other animal species. Sometimes these animal coronaviruses evolve and enter the human population. When these are identified for the first time in humans, they are called a new, or novel, coronavirus. In December 2019, a novel coronavirus was identified as a cause of respiratory infection in people in Wuhan, China, and it is now known as 2019 novel coronavirus or Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). Other examples of novel coronaviruses have included MERS-CoV (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus) and SARS-CoV (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus).

What is SARS-CoV-2?

SARS-CoV-2 is the new name of the virus responsible for the ongoing outbreak of respiratory disease. On February 11, 2020, the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses, charged with naming new viruses, named the novel coronavirus, first identified in Wuhan, China, severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2, shortened to SARS-CoV-2.

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is the new name for the illness caused by SARS-CoV-2.

What are symptoms?

The symptoms of infection with SARS-CoV-2 are often similar to those of other respiratory virus infections, such as influenza. These symptoms include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. The severity of symptoms can range from mild to severe.

Who is at risk?

Anyone who is exposed to SARS-CoV-2 is at risk of developing an infection. It's not clear yet how easily SARS-CoV-2 spreads from person-to-person. When person-to-person spread has occurred with other novel coronaviruses, such as MERS, it is thought to have happened mainly via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes, similar to how influenza and other respiratory pathogens spread. Spread of MERS and SARS has generally occurred between people in close contact.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has determined that the current risk of COVID-19 infection in the United States is low.

How are patients tested for COVID-19?

Tests that are currently available in clinical laboratories for the detection of respiratory viruses, including commonly circulating human coronaviruses that are frequent causes of respiratory illness, do NOT detect the virus that causes COVID-19. A positive result for one of the coronaviruses detected by these respiratory pathogen panels does NOT indicate COVID-19

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infection. Testing for COVID-19 is currently available only through the CDC with approval from the local health department.

What should I do if I recently traveled to Mainland China, South Korea, Iran, Italy or Japan and have a fever or cough or shortness of breath?

In this situation, you should seek medical care. Before you go to a doctor's office or emergency room, call ahead and tell them about your symptoms and recent travel. Depending on the severity of your symptoms, your doctor may determine that you do not need to come in to be evaluated. Avoid contact with others and wear a face mask if you need to leave your home when you are sick. Follow the other steps described below to prevent transmission of respiratory viruses.

Regardless of symptoms, if you've traveled from Mainland China, South Korea, Iran, Italy, or Japan within the past 14 days or if you are planning to travel to China or South Korea, you should call Workforce Health & Safety to plan your return to work.

Are there currently any patients with SARS-CoV-2 in New York City or New York State?

No. As of 2/27/20, 28 patients in New York State have been tested for SARS-CoV-2 and 27 are negative and 1 test result is pending.

Is there a vaccine?

No. There is currently no vaccine against SARS-CoV-2.

Does the CDC recommend the use of a face mask in the community to prevent COVID-19 infection?

No. The CDC does not currently recommend the use of face masks among the general public. While limited person-to-person spread among close contacts has been detected, this virus is not currently spreading in the community in the United States.

How can we protect against getting the virus?

The risk of exposure to SARS-CoV-2 in the United States is currently very low. The CDC recommends that people avoid all nonessential travel to Mainland China and South Korea. Several preventive actions can help to prevent spread of all respiratory viruses. These actions include:

- Wash your hands or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Stay home when you are sick
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow, rather than into your hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces

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What is NYP doing to prepare for an outbreak?

NYP is following the situation closely and implementing all recommendations provided by our local and state departments of health and the CDC. Our medical staff is receiving information and training on protocols to recognize, isolate, and evaluate patients who may have COVID-19 infection.

What steps do we follow at NYP when someone presents with symptoms and a travel history that suggests the possibility of infection with SARS-CoV-2?

At NYP, we have implemented screening protocols to quickly identify persons who may have COVID-19 infection. When such persons are identified, steps are taken to prevent transmission to other patients and personnel. These measures include asking the patient to wear a surgical mask, placing the patient in an isolation room, and having personnel wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), including an N95 respirator, gown, gloves, and eye protection.

When do patients need to wear masks?

Patients who are on droplet isolation or airborne isolation, who travel outside of their patient rooms for medical tests or procedures, wear a surgical facemask during transport. Also, high risk patients such as transplant patients also wear surgical facemasks when in public spaces. There is no need for patients to wear N95 masks.

Can staff wear masks to protect themselves while at work?

At NYP, surgical masks and N95 respirators should be used **ONLY** when indicated:

N95 Masks

- When entering the room of a patient on Airborne precautions
- When administering aerosolized ribavirin to a patient with RSV (respiratory syncytial virus)

Surgical face masks

- During invasive procedures
- When entering the room of a patient on droplet precautions (also wear eye protection)
- If you have not received the influenza vaccine and are in an area where patients may be present

How should an isolation room used for a COVID-19 patient under investigation (PUI) be cleaned? Which hospital-approved disinfectant should be used to clean and disinfect the room?

Routine cleaning and disinfection procedures are appropriate for novel coronaviruses in healthcare settings, including those patient-care areas in which aerosol-generating procedures are performed. Products with EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claims are recommended for use against novel coronavirus. All disinfectants used at NYP have EPA-approved emerging pathogens claims.



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Should I cancel my international travel because of novel coronavirus?

NYP follows the CDC travel guidelines. For travel advice for other countries, please visit that country's Destination Page or the Travel Health Notice website. Stay up to date with [CDC's travel health notices](#) related to this outbreak.

Currently, CDC recommends avoiding all nonessential travel to Mainland China and South Korea. Older adults and those with chronic medical conditions should consider postponing nonessential travel to Iran, Italy and Japan.

Where can I get more information?

This is a rapidly evolving situation. The [CDC website](#) is frequently updated as new information becomes available.

For questions, contact the Department of Infection Prevention & Control at your site:

NYP-AH: 212-932-5219

NYP-CU, NYP-MSCH, ACN: 212-305-7025

NYP-LH: 914-787-3045

NYP-LMH: 212-312-5976

NYP-WC, NYP-WBHC, ACN: 212-746-1754

NYP-BMH: 718-780-3569

NYP-HVH: 914-734-3927

NYP-Q: 718-670-1255

For non-urgent questions email: InfectionPreventionControl@nyp.org