



**Contra Costa Health Services**  
**Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions**

Updated February 28, 2020

The current FAQ is available at [cchealth.org/coronavirus](https://cchealth.org/coronavirus)

**What is a coronavirus?**

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses, some of which can make people sick. Some coronaviruses cause mild illness in people, such as the common cold. Other, such as the SARS and MERS viruses and the current 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19), can cause serious infections such as pneumonia.

Abbreviations used for the 2019 novel coronavirus include COVID-19 and 2019-nCoV.

**How does novel coronavirus spread?**

Novel coronavirus (COVID-19) can pass from a person sick from COVID-19 to others through:

- Droplets produced by coughing and sneezing
- Close personal contact, such as caring for an infected person

**How can I protect myself from novel coronavirus?**

The best way to reduce your risk of becoming infected with COVID-19 is the same as for other respiratory viruses, such as colds and the flu. The best way to prevent infection is to practice good hygiene:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water is not available
- People who are sick should always cover their coughs and sneezes using a tissue or the crook of their elbow; wash your hands or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer after using a tissue to wipe your nose or mouth
- People who are sick should stay home from work or school until they are well



- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with your unwashed hands

If COVID-19 does become more common in the local community, residents may consider taking steps to limit their contact with other members of the community such as stocking up on necessities, , avoiding large groups or crowds, limiting travel and adjusting work schedules or telecommuting when possible to reduce their risk of becoming exposed to the virus.

### **What are the symptoms of novel coronavirus illness?**

- Fever **and**
- Cough or difficulty breathing

People in Contra Costa County who have these symptoms are **not** likely to be infected with COVID-19 unless they have traveled internationally to affected countries in the past 14 days or were in close contact with someone sick with COVID-19.

What countries are affected?

The outbreak began in December 2019 in Hubei Province, China, but outbreaks are now occurring in other countries around the world. In addition to China, Iran, Italy, Japan and South Korea are experiencing outbreaks. For the latest information on affected countries, please refer to the CDC COVID-19 travel page at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/> in early December 2019.

### **How is novel coronavirus treated?**

There is no specific treatment at this time for illness caused by COVID-19. Treatment is supportive which means medications can be given to manage symptoms, just like with other respiratory illnesses like colds or the flu. Most people who become infected recover.

There is currently no vaccine to prevent against novel coronavirus.

### **Do I need a mask?**

Contra Costa Health Services does not recommend the use of masks for people who are healthy because there is no evidence that wearing one reduces the risk of becoming infected with COVID-19.

People who are sick with a respiratory illness should consider wearing a mask, such as a paper surgical mask, when they go out in public or visit their doctor to prevent spreading their infection to others.



### **Who is restricted from traveling to the United States because of novel coronavirus?**

There were no travel restrictions for people entering the U.S. before February 2. People who traveled from China arrived at a few select U.S. airports and were screened for symptoms.

After February 2, only U.S. citizens, legal permanent residents, and family members of U.S. citizens or permanent residents who visited China can enter the U.S. There are no travel restrictions in effect for other countries that may be affected by COVID-19.

In addition, the CDC issues advisories for international travelers regarding the risk of becoming infected with communicable diseases, including COVID-19, in different parts of the world. Visit [cdc.gov/travel](https://www.cdc.gov/travel) for the latest travel advisories.

### **How are travelers entering the U.S. from China screened?**

Any traveler entering the U.S. from China who has possible symptoms of COVID-19 (fever and cough or difficulty breathing) is screened at the airport and directly sent to a hospital for medical treatment.

Travelers from mainland China who do not have symptoms can go home but cannot go to work or school and are advised to avoid public places as much as possible until 14 days have passed. Local public health departments are notified of these travelers and monitor them until the 14 day-period has ended.

Travel from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau to the U.S. is not restricted.

### **Who is tested for novel coronavirus?**

Most people in the U.S. with fever or cough do not have COVID-19. The test for COVID-19 is not commercially available and all requests for testing must go through local health departments.

Only those people who are most likely to be sick with COVID-19 can be tested:

- People who have symptoms of COVID-19 (cough, fever, shortness of breath) that are severe enough to require hospitalization and who have traveled to affected countries in the past 14 days.
- People who have symptoms of COVID-19 (cough, fever, shortness of breath) and who were in close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case.

### **What happens if someone tests positive for novel coronavirus?**



Should there be a confirmed case of COVID-19 in Contra Costa County, Contra Costa Health Services would take steps to prevent its spread, including identifying any contacts to the person in order to identify who may have been exposed and assist them with follow-up.

The person who is ill would be kept away from the community while contagious.

