

Frequently Asked Questions About Novel Coronavirus

What is a coronavirus?

Coronavirus is a type of virus that causes diseases of varying severities, ranging from the common cold to more serious respiratory disease. A novel (new) coronavirus is a new strain of coronavirus that has not been identified before in humans.

What do we know about novel coronavirus?

There has been an outbreak of new illness called "novel coronavirus". While the illness started in China, people with the virus have been confirmed in several countries including the United States. Since this virus is very new, health authorities are carefully watching the situation and learning more about how this virus spreads. This situation is quickly changing and the U.S. Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) provides updated information as it becomes available.

What are the symptoms of novel coronavirus?

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

What is the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department doing?

The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department (SBCPHD) is working closely with the California Department of Public Health and the CDC to respond to the outbreak of this novel coronavirus. SBCPHD is communicating with local health care providers on how to safely and effectively evaluate ill people who have been to China. This situation is changing rapidly, and the CDC will provide updated information as it becomes available.

What should I do now to protect my family?

- Get the flu vaccine to protect against the flu or symptoms such as the new coronavirus.
- Wash your hands with soap and water, and rub for at least 20 seconds.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a handkerchief, sleeve or arm. Do not use your hand.
- Stay home if you have a fever, cough, have trouble breathing and feel tired.
- Try to stay away from large groups of people.
- Avoid people that are sick.

Should we avoid going to public events?

Remember, if you are not feeling well or are experiencing cold, flu or other symptoms, stay home to avoid spreading your germs to others. Take common-sense precautions to prevent the spread of infectious diseases and viruses like colds and flu and stay home to avoid the spread of germs.

I am sick. How do I know if its coronavirus or something else, like the flu?

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

Should we cancel travel plans to Asian countries?

At this time, the CDC has issued a Level 3 travel notice, recommending avoiding any trip to China, which is not essential. Check the CDC website for current recommendations for other countries

Should I wear a facemask when I am in the community to protect me from the novel coronavirus?

No. The US Centers for Disease Control does not currently recommend the use of facemasks among the public. The novel coronavirus is not currently spreading in communities in the United States. Limited person-to-person spread has occurred among close contacts of persons with confirmed novel coronavirus. Risk to the public is still low.

Am I at risk for 2019 Novel Coronavirus from a package or products shipping from China?

In general, because coronaviruses do not survive long on surfaces, there is likely very low risk of spread from products or packaging that are shipped over a period of days or weeks. Coronaviruses are generally thought to be spread most often by respiratory droplets. Currently there is no evidence to support transmission of 2019 novel coronavirus associated with imported goods. There have not been any cases of 2019 novel coronavirus in the United States associated with imported goods.

To school and parents:**What happens if someone has traveled to China and is now sick?**

In the rare case that a child or staff member who has recently returned from China is identified at school or work and has any of these respiratory symptoms (fever, cough or shortness of breath), they will have to be sent back home, and the school should immediately contact the Public Health Department.

How is the new coronavirus transmitted? Are my children and my family at risk?

It is not clear how easily or frequently the virus can spread from person to person, so it is important to practice good hygiene (cover your cough and sneeze, and wash your hands frequently with soap and water or alcohol-based disinfectant). We are still learning about this new virus.

When should I keep my child home from school?

If anyone is ill with fever, cough or other symptoms, they should stay home from work or school and other public activities until they have recovered.

Should children whose parents traveled to China stay home from school?

If a child has not traveled to an area with ongoing circulation, and they are not ill, they can continue their everyday activities. However, if a child is ill, they should be kept home.

Can a school send a student home if they recently returned from China and have cold-like symptoms?

Any student with a fever or respiratory symptoms can be sent home by the school.