Health Update
February 7, 2020

2019 Novel Coronavirus

This is a health update for medical providers about Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) from the Fresno County Department of Public Health (FCDPH). Key points and important weblinks are provided below to help inform health care practitioners and guide best practices related to this new viral infection based on the available evidence.

At this time, we do not have confirmed positive cases in Fresno County, but we anticipate that there may be cases in the future based on statewide and national trends. For the general population, who are unlikely to be exposed to this virus at the current time, the immediate health risk from 2019-nCoV is low.

FCDPH is working with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to monitor the situation closely and provide local guidance as needed for whom to screen, isolate, and test. As more is learned about this novel coronavirus outbreak, FCDPH will work with CDPH and the CDC to rapidly incorporate new knowledge into guidance for action.

1. Epidemiology and Virology
   a. Investigations are ongoing to learn more on how the 2019-nCoV virus spreads. Some degree of person-to-person spread of 2019-nCoV is occurring, as occurs with other respiratory illnesses.
   b. Transmission may be possible through droplet inhalation, direct contact with affected patients, or indirect contact with contaminated objects.
   c. Further Reading: https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/pdfs/mm6905e1-H.pdf

2. Clinical Signs of 2019-nCoV Infection
   a. Most people with confirmed 2019-nCoV infection report fever, cough, and dyspnea. The incubation period is believed to be between 2-14 days.

3. Information about International Travel
   a. Both the CDC and the CDPH have issued their highest-level travel alerts for China, advising Americans to avoid traveling there for the moment. (These advisories are likely to change as the outbreak evolves, so keep checking them.)

4. What to do if a patient walks in for assessment to a health care clinic or hospital

Categories of Health Alert Messages:

Health Alert: Conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention
Health Advisory: Provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action
Health Update: Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action
Health Information: Provides general health information which is not considered to be of emergent nature
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a. For patients who present to your office with fever, respiratory illness symptoms, and a recent history of travel to China, the CDC currently recommends a cautious approach, as outlined in the table and flowchart below.

b. The first step is prompt isolation in a room with a mask and contact precautions, followed by obtaining a detailed travel history for patients being evaluated with fever and lower respiratory tract illness.


5. What are the CDC criteria to guide evaluation and testing for 2019-nCoV?

a. Criteria for monitoring, self-isolation/quarantine, and laboratory testing are based on risk assessments of the individuals at risk. Laboratory testing of Persons Under Investigation (PUIs) for 2019-nCoV is warranted if the patient meets one of the following categories:
   i. Fever or signs or symptoms of lower respiratory tract illness (e.g., cough or shortness of breath) in any person, including health care workers, who has had close contact with a patient with laboratory-confirmed 2019-nCoV infection within 14 days of symptom onset.
   ii. Fever and signs or symptoms of lower respiratory tract illness (e.g., cough or shortness of breath) in any person (inpatient or outpatient) with a history of travel from Hubei Province, China, within 14 days of symptom onset.
   iii. Fever and signs or symptoms of lower respiratory tract illness (e.g., cough or shortness of breath) requiring hospitalization in any person with a history of travel from mainland China within 14 days of symptom onset.

b. Additionally, some non-hospitalized PUIs may be tested, based on consultation with state and local public health officials, with CDC permission/approval.

c. Clinicians should evaluate PUIs for other possible causes of illness (e.g., influenza and respiratory syncytial virus) as clinically indicated.


6. Preventative Steps and Home Isolation

a. Preventing or minimizing human to human transmission of Novel Coronavirus (and also many other respiratory pathogens such as influenza) is something that can be achieved by following CDC guidelines for home isolation and social distancing (e.g. avoiding public spaces and non-essential contacts).

b. Those who are asked to isolate themselves for a period of 14 days should: stay home (except to get medical care); separate themselves from others who live in the same household for daily activities and bathroom use if a separate one is available; call ahead to any doctor/ ED visits to make sure they can take necessary steps; wear a face mask around other people and in health care settings; cover any coughing sneezing and dispose of used tissues; wash hands frequently using soap and water or alcohol-base hand sanitizer; and monitor their symptoms and temperature twice a day to check for fevers.


7. Coronaviruses (including 2019-nCoV) and Influenza

a. Since there are many coronaviruses and they are routinely found in those with the common cold, it is not unusual to detect one or several coronaviruses during routine testing. However, these viruses are not the same as the 2019-nCoV, which can only be detected by the CDC laboratory at this time.

b. Coronavirus infections can resemble influenza—they are characterized by a spectrum of severity ranging from mild to severe symptoms, as well as respiratory symptoms of coughing, sneezing, sore throat and shortness of breath. It can be challenging to clinically distinguish influenza from coronavirus infections, and between the different coronaviruses.
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c. Preventative measures are similar for ALL respiratory viruses (see prior item for best steps and recommendations).

8. Finding Reliable Information Online: These sites have daily updates with the most accurate information about this evolving topic.
   a. CDPH: https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/nCOV2019.aspx
   c. WHO: https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus
   d. Guidance for schools: https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/Coronavirus/Schools
   e. Guidance for workplaces: https://www.doh.wa.gov/Coronavirus/Workplace

9. Contact the Fresno County Department of Public Health. We recognize that information about this issue is changing, and that this brief document may not address all the questions that you may have. PLEASE contact the Communicable Disease Investigation Program at (559) 600-3332 if you have any questions, concerns, or want to report a potential case.

10. We will share weekly updates and post these and other informational items on the Fresno County Department of Public Health Website, which can be found here: www.FCDPH.org

Links to Evaluation Tables and Signage:


Patient-facing Signage for Lobby/ Waiting/Triage Areas (English, Spanish, and Mandarin):


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