



## **Health Alert**

March 7, 2020

### **COVID-19 Positive Lab Result in a Returning Traveler**

The Fresno County Department of Public Health (FCPDH) has been informed that a Fresno County resident has tested positive for COVID-19. This individual is a traveler from the Grand Princess cruise ship and is in self-isolation at home. Several asymptomatic household members have been placed in home isolation for a period of 14 days in an effort to contain any secondary exposures. As this is a **travel-related** case, there is **no community transmission** (social spread) of COVID-19 at this time.

**The FCPDH will be holding a media availability event on March 8, 2020 to conduct interviews about the situation in Fresno County.**

FCDPH is alerting all healthcare facilities and medical providers about this development because it underscores the need for advanced planning, preparation, and due diligence related to containment strategies and mitigation measures to limit the number of infected individuals in the health care sector. To ensure readiness within our local health care community, health care providers and medical personnel are encouraged to review the following updates and reminders:

#### **Preventing Transmission of Respiratory Infections**

Although most patients are expected to recover at home even if they do contract the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) infection, we want to prevent or minimize community spread from occurring, especially in our health care workforce, medically fragile patients, and other vulnerable populations. **Health care providers are encouraged to counsel all patients about the importance of prevention related to this illness, and practice excellent prevention techniques in their clinical duties.**

In general, precautions for all respiratory illnesses including influenza and coronaviruses, are similar:

- Frequent handwashing or use of hand sanitizer and before and after each patient encounter

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Categories of Health Alert Messages:

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**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

#### ***Promotion, preservation and protection of the community's health***

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- Minimize hand-to-face contact and maintain a distance of 6 feet if possible
- Masks and avoidance of public spaces for those who have symptoms of respiratory illness
- Encourage those who are feeling mild symptoms to stay at home
- Patients older than 60 years old are encouraged to avoid congregate settings
- Medically fragile or complex patients should take extra precautions based on their medical condition to plan for social distancing, social isolation or a complication from a respiratory ailment

### Testing for COVID-19

Testing for COVID-19 is a rapidly evolving topic, and we will share updates as we acquire them about how best to accomplish this testing in those who require it. **Not everyone who has an uncomplicated respiratory illness will need to be tested for COVID-19.**

Patients who should be tested for COVID-19 should have the following:
1. Fever, cough, shortness of breath or other infectious respiratory complaint
2. <b>One</b> of the following in the last 14 days:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Travel on a cruise or from a US or international location with <b>10</b> or more COVID-19 cases. See this site for current case counts: <a href="https://www.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6">https://www.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6</a></li><li>• Contact with a laboratory confirmed COVID-19 patient</li><li>• Hospitalization for lower respiratory illness without an alternate explanation</li></ul>
If your patient fits these criteria, please call the FCDPH Communicable Disease Investigation Program at (559) 600-3332 or your facility's infection control team.

More updates will be forthcoming. The FCDPH is dedicated to supporting medical providers, hospitals, clinics, and long-term care facilities in responding to the unique challenges posed by the global outbreak.

### Health Care Facility Preparation

A complex and adaptive framework will be needed across all health care sectors to plan for increased patient volumes, staffing shortages, and supply deficits if the outbreak of COVID-19 expands and community transmission is noted in Fresno County. For guidance about preparation for these contingencies, please refer to these checklists and work with your internal disaster preparedness and infection control teams.

Department of Health and Human Services Preparedness Checklist:

<https://www.phe.gov/Preparedness/COVID19/Documents/COVID-19%20Healthcare%20Planning%20Checklist.pdf>



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The American College of Emergency Physicians Strategic Plan and Checklist for Emergency Departments:

[https://www.acep.org/globalassets/sites/acep/media/by-medical-focus/covid-19-national-strategic-plan\\_0320.pdf](https://www.acep.org/globalassets/sites/acep/media/by-medical-focus/covid-19-national-strategic-plan_0320.pdf)

Preparation guidance for health care facilities: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/steps-to-prepare.html>

#### Long Term Care Facilities (LTCF)

Skilled nursing facilities and other long-term care environments are especially vulnerable to multiple cases of COVID-19 infection in a single facility. These facilities should have plans in place for strict isolation of symptomatic individuals, and do frequent cleaning of surfaces in public areas. Washing hands should be enforced among all staff and residents, to help minimize the risk of cross-contamination. Congregate settings and group events may need to be reconsidered or cancelled if there is an exposure to a case of respiratory illness. The following is summarized guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for LTCFs.

#### How to prevent germs from ENTERING your facility:

- Post signs at the entrance instructing visitors not to visit if they have symptoms of respiratory infection.
- Ensure sick leave policies allow employees to stay home if they have symptoms of respiratory infection.
- Assess for symptoms of respiratory infection upon admission to the facility and implement appropriate infection prevention practices for incoming symptomatic residents.

#### Prevent the spread of respiratory germs WITHIN your facility

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- Keep residents and employees informed. Describe what actions the facility is taking to protect them, and what they can do to protect themselves and their fellow residents.
- Monitor residents and employees for fever or respiratory symptoms.
- Restrict residents with fever or acute respiratory symptoms to their room. If they must leave the room for medically necessary procedures, have them wear a facemask (if tolerated).
- In general, for care of residents with undiagnosed respiratory infection use Standard, Contact, and Droplet Precautions with eye protection unless suspected diagnosis requires Airborne Precautions (e.g., tuberculosis).
- Support hand and respiratory hygiene, as well as cough etiquette by residents, visitors, and employees.
- Identify dedicated employees to care for patients with infectious disease diagnoses and provide infection control training.
- Provide the right supplies to ensure easy and correct use of PPE.

### **Prevent the spread of respiratory germs BETWEEN facilities**

- Notify facilities prior to transferring a resident with an acute respiratory illness, including suspected or confirmed COVID-19, to a higher level of care.
- Report any possible COVID-19 illness in residents and employees to the local health department, including your state HAI/AR coordinator.

For the most up-to-date information, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/prevent-spread-in-long-term-care-facilities.html>

### **Support for Older Adults**

Community preparedness planning for COVID-19 should include older adults and people with disabilities, and the organizations that support them in their communities, to ensure their needs are taken into consideration. Many of these individuals live in the community, and many depend on services and supports provided in their homes or in the community to maintain their health and independence.

- Consider reviewing patient medications to see if you can help them have extra on hand in case they need to stay home due to illness or transportation disruptions.
- Encourage them to secure food and other medical supplies (oxygen, incontinence, dialysis, wound care), and create a back-up plan if their standard routes of getting these are not available.
- Finally, they can stock up on non-perishable food items to have on hand in the home to minimize trips to stores.