What is Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

Coronavirus Disease 2019, or COVID-19, is a respiratory disease caused by a novel (new) coronavirus that was first detected in Wuhan City, China and which continues to expand.

What is the health risk from COVID-19 in the Chicago area and Skokie?

At this time, this virus is NOT spreading in communities in the Chicago area. The goal of the ongoing U.S. public health response is to detect new cases quickly and prevent community spread. In the coming days and weeks there will likely be more confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the U.S. and globally, but strong public health measures now may reduce the impact of the virus. The Skokie Health Department (SHD) is monitoring the situation carefully and will rapidly communicate any changes in this guidance. **The immediate risk to Skokie residents is believed to be low at this time.**

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Patients who get sick with COVID-19 develop mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of:
- fever
- cough
- difficulty breathing

Many common illnesses can cause these same symptoms. COVID-19 can only be diagnosed at a public health laboratory.

Symptoms have ranged from mild to severe illness and death. CDC believes at this time that symptoms of COVID-19 may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure.

How does the virus spread?

Although the virus that causes COVID-19 probably emerged from an animal source, it can also spread from person-to-person. Spread from one person to another is thought to occur mainly by respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

What is the treatment for COVID-19?

There is no specific medicine to treat COVID-19 at this time, though studies are underway. People with COVID-19 should receive supportive care from a health care professional. Supportive care means care to help relieve symptoms; for example, medicine to bring down fevers, or oxygen if a patient's oxygen level is low.

Is there a vaccine?

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to take everyday preventive actions to help stop the spread of germs.

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How can I protect myself from COVID-19 and other respiratory diseases?

As with any respiratory virus, you can protect yourself and others by taking every day actions:

- **Cover your cough or sneeze** with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- **Wash your hands** often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, 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.**
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

It is currently flu and respiratory disease season and the SHD recommends getting a flu vaccine, and taking everyday preventive actions to help stop the spread of germs.

What are recommendations for using a facemask?

CDC, IDPH and SHD **do not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask** to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19. Facemasks should be used by people who are ill to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is also crucial for health workers and people who are taking care of someone in close settings (at home or in a health care facility).

What can travelers do to protect themselves and others?

CDC and SHD recommend travelers avoid all nonessential travel to destinations with level 3 travel notices because of the risk of getting COVID-19. A list of destinations with travel notices is available at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html.

What if I recently traveled to an area affected by COVID-19?

If you have been in China or other affected countries or have been exposed to someone sick with COVID-19 in the last 14 days, you will face some limitations on your movement and activity. Please follow instructions during this time. Your cooperation is important to the ongoing public health response to try to slow spread of this virus.

- Your health will be screened for COVID-19 symptoms. Travelers who have fever, cough, or trouble breathing will be taken to a medical facility for further evaluation and care.
- Travelers who have been in affected countries in the past 14 days and do not have symptoms will be placed in self-quarantine.
- If you develop COVID-19 symptoms, call the SHD. If you can't reach SHD, call ahead before going to a doctor's office or emergency room. Tell them your symptoms and that you were in a country with COVID-19 transmission.

Novel Coronavirus Hot Line

An Illinois COVID-19 Hotline has been set up to answer questions from the general public by dialing **1.800.889.3931** twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. You can also visit the SHD website at www.skokie.org or call us at 847.933.8252.

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