

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) General FAQ for Members

Last updated Feb. 21, 2020

Providence Health & Services is closely monitoring the novel coronavirus on behalf of our patients and members. According to the Oregon Health Authority, the coronavirus risk to Oregon residents remains low, as of February 21. You can visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) or the [Oregon Health Authority](#) websites for the most up-to-date information on the coronavirus. We will continue to monitor the situation as new information becomes available.

Q. What is novel coronavirus?

A. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that can cause respiratory symptoms similar to that of the common cold. They usually spread through contaminated surfaces, direct contact or in the air by coughing / sneezing from an infected individual. People usually get infected with common human coronaviruses in the fall and winter. In rare instances, animal Coronaviruses can evolve and infect people and then spread person to person such as with MERS and SARS. Past MERS and SARS outbreaks have been complex, requiring comprehensive public health responses. Please note normally coronaviruses are a common cause of respiratory illness and may show up on viral testing, but this travel screen only relates to the 2019 novel coronavirus that is causing the current outbreak from Wuhan, China.

Q. What is the current situation?

A. For the latest information, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

The first known US case was in Snohomish County, north of Seattle. The case was announced on January 21, 2020, and the patient, a male in his 30s and a Snohomish County resident, was treated and released from Providence Regional Medical Center Everett on Feb. 3. In consultation with state and federal public health authorities, the Snohomish Health District released the patient from home isolation on Feb. 20. He is now considered fully recovered. The patient had recently returned from Wuhan, China, where an outbreak of novel coronavirus has been underway since December 2019.

Q. How many cases are in the US?

A. For the latest U.S. count, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-in-us.html>.

Q. What are the risks for getting the virus?

A. The risk to the general public is low. In addition, even in China there have been relatively few cases identified to date in relation to the size of their population. Coronaviruses are primarily spread through respiratory droplets, which means to become infected, people generally have to be within six feet of someone who is contagious and have droplets land on them. This is very different from airborne diseases like measles.

Q. What are we doing to ensure the safety of our patients and caregivers?

A. Infection Prevention leadership is in close contact with the CDC and monitoring guidance from the World Health Organization, sharing updates on care protocols with caregivers to help navigate responding to this new disease. There is an epidemic screening tool in Epic to better help identify patients that may have the novel coronavirus from Wuhan, China. Good hand hygiene is being emphasized during this high season for flu and colds as well, which is one of the best ways to protect both patients and caregivers.

Q. What are the symptoms of coronavirus?

A. Most coronaviruses cause respiratory illnesses, including cough and fever. The common cold is a type of coronavirus. Symptoms may include runny nose, headache, cough, sore throat and/or fever.

Q. Is there a vaccine for 2019 coronavirus?

A. At this time, there is no vaccine for coronavirus. You can help prevent the spread of illness by washing hands often with soap and running water, avoiding close contact with others who are sick, covering your coughs or sneezes with a tissue, and cleaning and disinfecting objects and surfaces. If you have cold-like symptoms, as a courtesy to your coworkers, remain at home while you are sick.

Q: How is coronavirus spread?

A: Human coronaviruses are usually spread from an infected person to others through the air by coughing and sneezing and through close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands.

Q. What should I do if I get sick?

A. If you have traveled from the Wuhan area of China or been in close contact with someone with confirmed novel coronavirus 2019 and feel sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, call your health care provider BEFORE going to get care and tell them about your symptoms and travel. They can provide you instructions for seeking care so that you do not expose others. If you need help finding a provider or need other assistance, call the number on the back of your Providence Health Plan member ID card. There are many causes of fevers, coughs, and other respiratory symptoms. Most clinics have surgical masks that you may be asked to wear while in the clinic. Please protect others and wear a mask if asked. Wash your hands. Cover your cough or sneeze. If you are ill, stay home.

Q: Will Providence Health Plan cover 2019 coronavirus testing?

A: Currently, the CDC is the only approved lab to perform testing for COVID-19 and is not billing for the testing.

Q. How is this virus treated?

A. Treatment is supportive care for symptoms, fluid intake, and isolation/observation. There is no cure for this virus.

Q: Where can I obtain more information?

A: You can find more information at these links:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- Oregon Health Authority - <http://healthoregon.org/coronavirus>