



**Contra Costa Health Services  
Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions**

Updated February 14, 2020

The current FAQ is available at [cchealth.org/coronavirus](https://cchealth.org/coronavirus)

**What is a coronavirus?**

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses, some of which can make people sick. Some coronaviruses cause mild illness in people, such as the common cold. Other, such as the SARS and MERS viruses and the current 2019 novel (new) coronavirus, can cause serious infections such as pneumonia.

Abbreviations used for the 2019 novel coronavirus include COVID-19 and 2019-nCoV.

**How does novel coronavirus spread?**

Novel coronavirus (COVID-19) can pass from a person sick from COVID-19 to others through:

- Droplets produced by coughing and sneezing
- Close personal contact, such as caring for an infected person

**How can I protect myself from novel coronavirus?**

There is no evidence of community spread of Covid-19 within the United States at this time, but Contra Costa Health Services is taking steps to prepare for community spread if it does develop.

It is important to remember that people travel to China for business and tourism, and travel to China is not exclusive to Chinese-Americans visiting relatives. In fact, many Bay Area residents of Chinese heritage have not traveled to China recently.

Avoiding or excluding people based on their race or a belief they may have recently traveled in an area where novel coronavirus is prevalent is **not** an effective way to reduce your risk of exposure.



The best way to reduce your risk of becoming infected with a more common respiratory virus, such as colds and the flu, is to practice good hygiene:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water is not available
- People who are sick should always cover their coughs and sneezes using a tissue or the crook of their elbow; wash your hands or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer after using a tissue to wipe your nose or mouth
- People who are sick should stay home from work or school until they are well
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with your unwashed hands

### **What are the symptoms of novel coronavirus illness?**

- Fever
- Cough
- Difficulty breathing

If you start having a fever **and** one of these other symptoms within 14 days of traveling from mainland China, seek medical care right away. Call ahead before you go to a doctor's office or hospital.

People in Contra Costa County who have these symptoms are **not** likely to be infected with COVID-19 unless they have traveled to China in the past 14 days or were in close contact with someone sick with COVID-19.

### **How is novel coronavirus treated?**

There is no specific treatment for illness caused by COVID-19, but many of the symptoms of the illness can be managed. Most people who become infected recover.

There is currently no vaccine to prevent against novel coronavirus.

### **Who is restricted from traveling to the United States because of novel coronavirus?**

There were no travel restrictions for people entering the U.S. before February 2. People who traveled from China arrived at a few select U.S. airports and were screened for symptoms.

After February 2, only U.S. citizens, legal permanent residents, and family members of U.S. citizens or permanent residents who visited China can enter the U.S.



### **How are travelers entering the U.S. from China screened?**

Any traveler entering the U.S. from China who has possible symptoms of COVID-19 (fever and cough or difficulty breathing) is screened at the airport and directly sent to a hospital for medical treatment.

Travelers from mainland China who do not have symptoms can go home but cannot go to work, school, or public places until 14 days have passed. Local public health departments are notified of these travelers and monitor them until the 14 day-period has ended.

Travel from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau to the U.S. is not restricted.

### **Who is tested for novel coronavirus?**

Most people in the U.S. with fever or cough do not have COVID-19. The CDC is the only U.S. lab at this time that can test for COVID-19. Some state and county labs will be able to test for COVID-19 soon.

Only people in these groups are likely to be sick with COVID-19 and can be tested:

- People who traveled to the U.S. from Hubei Province, China, within the past 14 days who have fever **and** a cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing.
- People who traveled to the U.S. from mainland China within the past 14 days who have fever and cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing.
- People with fever **and** a cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing who were in close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case.

### **What happens if someone tests positive for novel coronavirus?**

Should there be a confirmed case of COVID-19, Contra Costa Health Services would take steps to prevent its spread, including identifying any contacts to the person in order to identify who may have been exposed and assist them with follow-up.

The person who is ill would be kept away from the community while contagious.

### **Do local school districts have or need a screening process for students who may return from China?**

Contra Costa Health Services works closely with schools to provide current information and advice about COVID-19, from sources such as the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention and the California Department of Public Health.

Contra Costa Health Services does not recommend schools create screening or exclusion policies specifically for novel coronavirus, or for people who recently traveled to China.



Most schools already have policies that can prevent illnesses from spreading at school – one of the most important is that students and staff should stay home when ill.

**Should a student who recently visited China attend a local school?**

People who recently visited mainland China are advised to stay home for 14 days to ensure they do not have novel coronavirus. Recent travelers do not go to school or work and are monitored by the public health department during these 14 days.

Anyone who was exposed to novel coronavirus should develop symptoms within 14 days. Anyone who remains healthy after 14 days never had coronavirus to begin with and cannot spread it later.

