

CORONAVIRUS (COVID 19) FACTS and FAQs

March 17,2020

We will do our best to update this information page as developments occur. This outbreak is a fluid situation. For the most up to date information check the CDC www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html and the DC Health Department www.coronavirus.dc.gov websites.

INCUBATION PERIOD (the time between contact with someone with Covid 19 and symptom onset) is about 2-9 days. Average of 5 days. We think that all patient who will develop symptoms will do so within 14 days of exposure to someone else with the disease and that is why the self-quarantine is set at 14 days when necessary.

INITIAL PRESENTATION – Unlike the flu which starts with a bang (“I was hit by a truck.”) this virus is more subtle initially. One week of muscle aches, fatigue, cough, low grade fever.

PROGRESSION IF DISEASE GETS WORSE- gradually leading to more severe trouble breathing in the second week. It is usually **8 days into the illness that shortness of breath** occurs. If you develop pneumonia it is on day 9 or so.

WHO SHOULD SELF QUARANTINE?

If you are informed that you were in contact with someone with a confirmed case of Covid 19 the safest approach is to self-quarantine.

This means to isolate yourself at home for 14 days from the last time you saw the person that was infected. This means not going to work or school, and not attending any large or public gatherings. Do not use public transportation or ride share.

Due to transmission of Covid 19 in the US if you have symptoms consistent with Covid 19 but have not been tested due to the scarcity of testing availability we think it is reasonable to self-quarantine as well.

WHO SHOULD CONSIDER “SOCIAL ISOLATION”?

As Dr. Anthony Fauci, the Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, announced on March 8, 2020 all people over the age of 70 should not go on a cruise, fly on an airplane, or go to public gatherings. This means not going to restaurants, movie theatres, plays, meetings, concerts. While this may seem draconian the basic concept is to **slow the spread of the virus**. Currently we believe that everyone should be practicing social distancing. Doctors, scientists, hospitals need time in order to make the covid 19 testing available widely, to have adequate stock of N95 masks to protect health care workers, to have space in hospitals to care for patients with pneumonia. If we can slow the spread, we will all be better off. There are so many questions we don't have answers to right now so slowing the spread will buy us some time.

The federal government advised on March 16, 2020 that all people practice social distancing and not congregate in groups of 10 or more.

These additional FAQ's are adapted from "Healthcare Practice Advisor" Blog. posted on March 7, 2020 and may not represent the most up to date information.

Q: I Had the Flu Vaccine. Will It Protect Me Against the Coronavirus?

A: No, the flu vaccine is not effective against the Coronavirus and currently there isn't a vaccine to prevent it. Your best protection is to avoid exposure. The CDC recommends standard preventive measures, including:

Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.

Stay home when you are sick.

Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.

Q: What do I need to know about face masks?

A: Face masks are recommended for symptomatic patients to prevent them spreading the virus by sneezing or coughing but currently it is nearly impossible to buy them; Face masks are not intended for healthy people to wear to guard against getting Coronavirus. Face masks are exposed on the side so they cannot prevent the virus from entering the lungs. However, they can be effective in preventing people from touching their faces and putting the virus where it can enter the lungs.

There is currently a global face mask shortage as well. The CDC recommends face masks for symptomatic individuals and their care givers. Healthcare workers who are in contact with patients who have confirmed, or possible infection should wear respirators, which prevent inhaling the virus's small particles.

Q: I Have a Cough, But Feel Fine – Should I Be Concerned?

While a cough is a symptom of the Coronavirus, it doesn't mean you have the virus. To assess your symptoms, keep in mind that they may appear 2-14 days after exposure, and patients with Coronavirus have reported mild to severe respiratory symptoms including cough, fever, and difficulty breathing. If you develop symptoms and you've been in close contact with a person known to have Coronavirus or if you've recently traveled from China or an area with widespread or ongoing community spread of Coronavirus in the past two weeks, you should contact your physician.

Q: I Have a Cold. Should I Come in and Be Seen?

Because the symptoms of Coronavirus mimic those of other viruses, it is difficult to know what you have. Generally, a simple cold doesn't warrant a visit to your doctor. **If your symptoms are manageable, the CDC recommends that you stay home to avoid spreading germs to others.** And, while you are home, wear a face mask if you are around others, wash your hands often, cover your coughs and sneezes, don't share personal household items, and sanitize frequently touched surfaces daily.