City of Stamford Department of Health

Safeguarding the Public's Health

2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is a novel coronavirus?

A: A novel coronavirus is a new coronavirus that has not been previously identified. The virus causing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), is not the same as the coronavirus that commonly circulates among humans and causes mild illness, like the common cold.

Q: What is the source of COVID-19?

A: Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Some cause illness in people, and others only infect animals. Rarely, coronaviruses that infect animals have emerged to infect people and can spread between people. This is suspected to have occurred for the virus that causes COVID-19.   More information about the source and spread of COVID-19 is available on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) website at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html

Q: How does the COVID-19 virus spread?

A: This virus was first detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. The first infections were linked to a live animal market, but the virus is now spreading from person-to-person within the community.

Q: Can someone who has had COVID-19 spread the illness to others?

A: The virus that causes COVID-19 is spreading person-to-person. Someone who is actively sick with COVID-19 can spread the illness to others. That is why CDC recommends that these patients be isolated either in the hospital or at home (depending on how sick they are) until they are better and no longer pose a risk of infecting others.

Q: Can someone who has been quarantined for COVID-19 spread the illness to others?

A: Quarantine means separating a person or group of people who have been exposed to a contagious disease but have not developed illness (symptoms) from others who have not been exposed, in order to prevent the possible spread of that disease. Quarantine usually lasts for the span of time it would normally take people who have been exposed to develop illness. For COVID-19, the period of quarantine is 14 days from the last date of exposure. Someone who has been released from COVID-19 quarantine is not considered a risk for spreading the virus to others because they have not developed illness during the14 day period.

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Q: Why might someone blame individuals and groups (create stigma) because of COVID-19?

A. Stigma is discrimination against an identifiable group of people, a place, or a nation. Stigma is associated with a lack of knowledge, a need to blame someone, fears about disease and death, and gossip that spreads rumors and myths.

Stigma hurts everyone by creating more fear or anger towards ordinary people instead of the disease that is causing the problem. Help stop stigma by learning and sharing facts about the COVID virus.

Q: How can I help protect myself?

A. The primary way to prevent infecting yourself is by washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or using a hand sanitizer with 60%-95% alcohol, and staying away from people who are sick.

Q: What should I do if I had close contact with someone who has COVID-19?

A: Close contact means:

  a) being within approximately 6 feet (2 meters) of a COVID-19 case for a prolonged period of time; close contact can occur while caring for, living with, visiting, or sharing a health care waiting area or room with a COVID-19 case
       or –
  b) having direct contact with infectious secretions of a COVID-19 case (e.g., being coughed on)

If you think that you have had close contact with a COVID-19 case, call the Stamford Department of Health during work hours at 203-977-4398; after hours at 203-977-5555.

Q: Does CDC recommend the use of facemask in the community to prevent COVID-19?

A: CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19. You should only wear a mask if a healthcare professional recommends it. A facemask should be used by people who have COVID-19 and are showing symptoms. This is to protect others from the risk of getting infected. The use of facemasks is crucial for health workers and other people who are taking care of someone infected with COVID-19 in close settings (at home or in a health care facility).

Q: What are the symptoms caused by COVID-19?

A: The common symptoms reported for patients with COVID-19 have included mild to severe respiratory illness with fever, cough, and difficulty breathing. These symptoms are frequently reported with other respiratory diseases such as the flu. This is why you need to tell your healthcare provider about your travel history or contact with a COVID-19 case.

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Q: Should I be tested for COVID-19?

A: If you develop a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness, such as cough or shortness of breath, you should call ahead to a healthcare professional and ask for advice on testing. Your healthcare professional will work with you and the Stamford Department of Health to determine if you need to be tested for COVID-19.

Q: Can a person who was exposed to COVID-19 test negative and later test positive for COVID-19?

A: Using the diagnostic test developed by CDC, a negative result means that the virus that causes COVID-19 was not found in the person's sample. In the early stages of infection, it is possible the virus will not be detected and you will test negative but as the infection progresses, you may later test positive

For COVID-19, a negative test result for a sample collected while a person has symptoms likely means that the COVID-19 virus is not causing their current illness.

Q: What should healthcare professionals do?

A: For recommendations and guidance on persons under investigation; infection control, including personal protective equipment guidance; home care and isolation; and case investigation, healthcare professional should visit the CDC website.

Q: What is Stamford Department of Health doing about COVID-19?

A: This is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation and the Stamford Department of Health is working closely with the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) and CDC to provide updated information and to implement guidelines to protect the residents of Stamford.

Q: Am I at risk for COVID-19 in the United States?

A: This is a rapidly evolving situation and the risk of infection may change daily. The latest updates are available on CDC's Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) website at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html

Q: Has anyone in the United States gotten infected?

A: Yes. The first COVID-19 case in the United States was reported on January 21, 2020. The first confirmed instance of person-person-spread with this virus in the U.S. was reported on January 30, 2020. There have been no cases of COVID-19 reported in the City of Stamford. See the CDC website at website at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html for the current U.S. case count.

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Q: Am I at risk for COVID-19 from an imported package or product?

A: We still do not know a lot about the COVID-19 spreads. However, based on what we know previously about other similar coronavirus, there is likely a very low risk of spread from products or packaging that are shipped over a period of days or weeks at room temperatures. Currently there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 associated with imported goods.

Q: Will warm weather stop the outbreak of COVID-19?

A: It is not yet known if weather and temperature affect the spread of COVID-19. At this time, it is not known whether the spread of COVID-19 will decrease when weather becomes warmer.

Q: What risks do imported animals or animal products pose?

A: CDC does not have any evidence at this time to suggest that imported animals or animal products pose a risk for spreading COVID-19 in the United States.

Q: Can I travel to the United States with pets during the COVID-19 outbreak?

A: Please refer to CDC's requirements for bringing pets into the United States.

Q: Should I be concerned about pets or other animals and COVID-19?

A: While this virus seems to have emerged from an animal source, it is now spreading from person-to-person. There is no reason to think that any animals including pets in the United States might be a source of infection with this new coronavirus.   At this time, there is no evidence that companion animals including pets can be infected with or spread COVID-19. However, since animals can spread other diseases to people, it's always a good idea to wash your hands after being around animals.

Q: Should I avoid contact with pets or other animals if I am sick with COVID-19?

A: You should avoid contact with pets and other animals while you are sick with COVID-19 until more information is known about the virus. When possible, have another member of your household care for your animals while you are sick. If you must care for your pets or be around animals while you are sick, wash your hands before and after you interact with pets and wear a facemask.

Q: What precautions should be taken for animals that have recently been imported into the United States?

A: Animals imported into the United States must meet CDC and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) requirements for entering the United States. At this time, there is no evidence that companion animals including pets can be infected with or spread COVID-19. As with any animal introduced to a new environment, animals recently imported from outside of the United Stated should be observed daily for signs of illness. If an animal becomes ill, the animal should be examined by a veterinarian. Call your local veterinary clinic before bringing the animal into the clinic and let them know that the animal was recently imported into the United States.

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Q: Should I avoid animals and animal markets?

A: In the United States, there is no reason to think that any animals, including pets or livestock, might be a source of COVID-19 infection at this time. If you are visiting a live animal market anywhere in the world, it is important to clean your hands thoroughly with soap and water before and after visiting the

Q. What can I do to help the response to this emerging threat?

A. You can help by doing the following:

- *Voluntary Home Isolation:* Stay home and keep your children at home when you or they are sick with respiratory disease symptoms. Call yours or your child's medical provider and seek advice.
- *Respiratory Etiquette:* Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, then throw it in the trash can.
- *Hand Hygiene:* Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds; especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with 60%-95% alcohol.
- *Environmental Health Action:* Routinely clean frequently touched surfaces and objects.
- *Travelers from affected countries*: Follow the advice that you are given by your Local and State Departments of Health. If you develop a fever, cough or shortness of breath within 14 days of arriving in the United States from an affected country, please call the Stamford Department of Health at 203-977-4398 during business hours or 203-977-5555 after hours.
- *Persons exposed to a person with COVID-19 AND who develop symptoms:* Please contact your healthcare provider, and tell them about your symptoms and your exposure to a COVID-19 patient.
- *Have a family plan:* Develop a family plan should you and or your family need to stay home for an extended period.
- *Have a business plan:* Develop a business plan should you need to close temporarily or your workers are unable to come to work.
- *Healthcare providers:* Be on the lookout for people presenting with a fever and respiratory illness who recently traveled to affected geographic areas (See the CDC website for the most recent listing of those countries). Take care of your own health and follow recommended infection prevention procedures. Report all suspect or confirmed cases of COVID-19 to DPH and to the Stamford Department of Health.

Please refer to the following for more information:
City of Stamford website "COVID-19 Information for Stamford Residents"
https://www.stamfordct.gov/public-safety-health-welfare/pages/covid-19-information-for-stamford-residents

CT Department of Public Health Website
https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/Public-Health-Preparedness/Main-Page/2019-Novel-Coronavirus

CDC Website https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html

Adopted from the CDC Frequently Asked Questions and Answers. https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html. Accessed March 1, 2020