

# Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)

## Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Guidance for Field Staff (non-healthcare workers)

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (Public Health) is asking for your assistance to prepare for and help prevent the spread of the novel (new) coronavirus in Los Angeles County. Globally, there continues to be a growing number of people infected with this virus which causes “coronavirus disease 2019” (abbreviated COVID-19) in mainland China and elsewhere. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization, current global trends indicate that the virus may spread worldwide causing a pandemic. We need to prepare to prevent the spread of this infection locally.

### Understand how coronaviruses are spread

COVID-19 is likely to spread in the same way as other respiratory illnesses like influenza. It is thought to spread from an infected person who has symptoms to others by:

- Droplets produced through coughing and sneezing;
- Close personal contact, such as caring for an infected person;
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes before washing your hands.

### Taking steps to prevent infection is important

There is no vaccine or cure for COVID-19 at this time. Antibiotics only treat infections caused by bacteria, so antibiotics won't work against the virus that causes COVID-19. The best thing you can do to protect yourself is to take the following steps to avoid infection:

- Washing your hands often and doing it thoroughly. Use soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol for at least 20 seconds.
- Limiting close contact with people who are sick. Try to stay at least 6 feet away from someone who is sick – for example, if you see someone coughing, move away.
- Routinely cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces using regular household cleaning spray or wipes.
- Not sharing objects such as utensils, cups, food, and drink.
- Getting a flu shot to protect against influenza.

### Know the symptoms of COVID-19

Most people will have a mild or moderate illness and will get better without complications. Symptoms in children tend to be milder, but our understanding of this illness is continuing to evolve. We do know that some individuals, mainly adults, will become severely ill and need to go to the hospital.

Symptoms include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Difficulty breathing

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### Take extra care if you are at risk of serious illness from COVID-19

- Some people are more likely to become seriously ill if they get COVID-19. This includes the elderly, people with HIV or cancer who may have weakened immune systems, and those with heart or lung disease. It is very important that these people take extra care to avoid close contact with other people who are sick and contact their healthcare provider immediately if they do become sick.
- Develop back-up plans with colleagues to ensure the continuity of essential services should there be a need for you and others to be absent from work.

### Know what to do if you become ill

- Stay at home or go home as soon as possible if you begin to feel unwell, even if you have mild symptoms such as headaches and a slight runny nose. Stay home for at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever or symptoms of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medicines.
- Wash your hands well and often.
- Cover your cough and sneezes with a tissue, and then dispose of the tissue and clean your hands immediately. If you do not have a tissue, use your sleeve (not your hands).
- Watch for signs of serious symptoms such as worsening fever, rapid breathing, shortness of breath or dehydration (unable to keep fluids down), and seek medical care if needed.

### For tasks or situations where you cannot avoid being in direct contact with people you do not know

Stop and think through how you can protect yourself and others as much as possible. Strategies include:

- using protective gear, such as surgical masks and gloves;
- keeping as much of a distance from people as you can;
- reducing the amount of time that you need to be in a situation where you are in close contact with people who may be ill.

### If a client or resident has a fever, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing, or cough:

- Remain at least 6 feet away from the person.
- Have the client place a surgical mask on their face to cover their mouth and nose and place a mask on yourself. Wear gloves if there will be physical contact.
- Encourage clients to stay home if they are sick and call their doctors before going into a clinic, urgent care or ER for evaluation.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for a minimum of 20 seconds after any physical contact with the client, if no hand wash station is available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

### Adopt social distancing standard practices when possible

- Create opportunities to communicate with clients remotely, via text, phone or Skype.
- Revisit policies that set rigid schedules for in-person encounters to allow maximum flexibility to avoid visits or sessions with clients who are ill.
- Consider alternatives to participating at large mass gatherings in order to provide services, education, and support and ask community partners to assist with the distribution of educational materials and offering your customary services in places that allow for maximum distancing between and field staff.

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When engaging in community outreach, approach others cautiously to avoid being in close contact with residents who may be ill. Keep a 6-foot distance from others until you have established that the situation is safe. Keep a supply of gloves and surgical masks handy (and know how to appropriately use these) for situations where you are not able to maintain your distance.

### Know where to get reliable information

Beware of scams, false news and hoaxes surrounding novel coronavirus. Accurate information, including announcements of new cases in LA County, will always be distributed by Public Health through press releases, social media, and our website. The website has more information on COVID-19 including FAQs, infographics and a guide to coping with stress, as well as tips on handwashing.

- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH, County)
  - <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/>
  - Social media: @lapublichealth
- The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health Access Center 24/7 Helpline (800) 854-7771.

Other reliable sources of information about novel coronavirus are:

- California Department of Public Health (CDPH, State)
  - <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/nCOV2019.aspx>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, National)
  - <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/novel-coronavirus-2019.html>
- World Health Organization (WHO, International)
  - <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>

If you have questions and would like to speak to someone, or need help finding medical care, call the Los Angeles County Information line 2-1-1 which is available 24 hours a day.