



**TULARE COUNTY
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY**

Timothy W. Lutz, MBA
Agency Director

Karen M. Elliott, MBA • Director • Public Health Branch Director
Karen Haught, MD, MPH • County Health Officer

March 2, 2020

FAQ

The Tulare County Public Health Department continues to closely monitor the 2019 Novel Coronavirus, referred to as COVID-19, and understands that questions may arise. This is intended to provide some key points in addressing some common inquiries.

Please understand that COVID-19 is an emerging disease and we have learned a great deal about the virus that is helping us to prepare; however, there is more to learn about how it is transmitted and recovery factors.

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease, like influenza, and there are tried-and-true ways to deal with this type of illness.

The most important factor for our community right now is to become informed and stay calm.

Does Tulare County have any cases of COVID-19?

Tulare County has not had any reported cases of COVID-19 at this time, and Tulare County is considered to have a low risk. Cases elsewhere have been related to travel to China or close contact with someone known to have COVID-19 within the 14 days before illness onset. There are now other countries that are seeing increased spread in cases, as well.

I have known someone who said they had coronavirus before so what is the difference?

There are other coronaviruses that cause cold-like symptoms. This new strain called COVID-19 is different and can only be identified by a special test.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Confirmed cases of COVID-19 range from mild illness to severe illness and death. Symptoms include fever, cough that can worsen, and shortness of breath. The CDC indicates they believe, at this time, that symptoms can appear within two to 14 days after exposure. The incubation period appears to be similar to what we have previously seen with other coronaviruses (MERS/SARS).

What if people who have the COVID-19 virus are not showing symptoms?

Some spread may be possible before people show symptoms, health organizations continue to study COVID-19 for more specific indicators. At this time, it is thought that people are the most contagious when they are showing symptoms and are clearly ill (symptomatic).



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How does COVID-19 spread?

COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person between people who are in close contact (six feet) via respiratory droplets expelled when a person with the infection coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby and inhaled into the lungs. At this time, this is the main way the virus is thought to spread. The droplets can also land on nearby surfaces that other people touch and then they touch their own mouth, nose, or eyes, though it is unknown at this time if this is another main way the virus spreads.

What if someone I know or am in contact with has some of the travel or contact risk factors?

If you are in contact with a client or consumer who expresses to you that they have risk factors, we ask that you please contact the Public Health Communicable Disease telephone line by calling 2-1-1. If clients or consumers ask you about COVID-19, you can refer them to the HHSA website at tchhsa.org/ncov. There, they can connect to additional websites, such as the CDC and the California Department of Public Health.

What about travelers or visitors from overseas to Tulare County?

There has been some expansion of concern for travelers from other countries and community members who may have traveled to other countries overseas. The Public Health Branch is in daily contact with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) to ascertain if further travel restrictions or precautions are directed.

What if someone is worried that they have COVID-19 from travel to an area of risk or close contact with someone who traveled to an area of risk?

For those in Tulare County, please immediately call the Public Health Communicable Disease telephone line by calling 2-1-1, which will place you in contact with an individual who will assess your situation and immediately restrict activities outside your home. Public Health Branch staff can assist you with next steps, which would include calling ahead to the nearest emergency medical facility to receive assistance.

Stigma and COVID-19

One cannot determine if there is a risk of COVID-19 by judging a person's nationality and appearance. The desire to do so is called discrimination and this type of stigma creates unwarranted fear and anger towards a group of people instead of directing those feelings at the disease that is causing the problem. Fight stigma and discrimination.



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What are areas of risk?

On February 29, the U.S. government announced it was suspending entry of foreign national s who have been in Iran within the past 14 days. (The suspension was already applied to China.)

To date, CDC has issued:

- Level 3 Travel Health Notices (Avoid Nonessential Travel) for China, Iran, Italy, and South Korea.
- Level 2 Travel Health Notices (Practice Enhanced Precautions) for Japan.
- Level 1 Travel Health Notices (Practice Usual Precautions) for Hong Kong.
- CDC also recommends that all travelers reconsider cruise ship voyages into or within Asia at this time.
- This is consistent with guidance by the U.S. State Department.

Are there precautions I should take against COVID-19?

Community members should take precautions against any illness with steps such as:

- Regularly and thoroughly wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use hand sanitizer if no soap is available, especially before eating and after contact with others
- Cover coughs and sneezes, and avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces with regular household cleaning sprays or wipes
- Avoid contact with sick individuals
- Stay home if you have symptoms of illness, and disinfect frequently touched surfaces
- Use medications as instructed by your physician
- Get a flu shot—it isn't too late in the season and our flu numbers are elevated

Individuals with flu symptoms, particularly those with risk factors such as pregnancy, diabetes, heart disease, asthma, and kidney disease, and those with children age five and younger should talk to their health care providers about antiviral medication.

Should I be wearing a facemask?

Facemasks are crucial for health workers and people who are taking care of someone with an illness in a close setting, such as at home or in a healthcare facility. They should be used by people who need to seek medical care to be evaluated for COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. These individuals should call ahead prior to medical care to arrange to have a mask.



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What if I have other questions?

For frequently asked questions on the virus, the following links to the World Health Organization and Center for Disease Control provide good guidance:

<https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html>