Dear Public Health Partners:

We’re writing today to provide an update on the outbreak of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health continue to work in partnership with the Ohio Department of Health to monitor the situation, and are prepared to protect health and prevent the spread of infectious disease.

As of March 8, 2020, there are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Ohio. Although, the U.S. expects to detect more COVID-19 cases through travel, as well as more person-to-person spread and community transmission of this virus, the CDC still considers the risk to the general American public to be low.

What’s New

To slow the spread of COVID-19 into the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is working with state and local public health partners to implement after-travel health precautions.

Depending on a person’s travel history, they will be asked to stay home for a period of 14 days from the time they left an area with widespread or ongoing community spread (Level 3 Travel Health Notice), which are currently the following countries: China, Iran, Italy and South Korea.

While staying home and practicing social distancing for these 14 days, the CDC also asks returned travelers to:

- Take your temperature with a thermometer two times a day and monitor for fever. Also watch for cough or trouble breathing.
- Stay home and avoid contact with others. Do not go to work or school for this 14-day period. Discuss your work situation with your employer before returning to work.
- Do not take public transportation, taxis or ride-shares during the time you are practicing social distancing.
- Avoid crowded places (such as shopping centers and movie theaters) and limit your activities in public.
- Keep your distance from others (about 6 feet or 2 meters).

If during this 14-day period a traveler gets sick with fever (100.4°F/38°C or higher), cough or has trouble breathing:

- Seek medical care. Call ahead before you go to a doctor’s office or emergency room.
- Tell your doctor about your recent travel and your symptoms.
- Avoid contact with others.
If you need to seek medical care for other reasons, such as dialysis, call ahead to your doctor and tell them about your recent travel to an area with widespread or ongoing community spread of COVID-19.

For more information on these travel guidelines, please click here.

Learn More

Please read the summaries below for an update on the COVID-19 outbreak and public health’s response – the accompanying links will direct you to more information.

As a reminder, this situation is a rapidly evolving and information will be updated as it becomes available. For the most accurate and current information on COVID-19, please continue to refer to the CDC website. You may also visit the Ohio Department of Health, Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health websites for local information.

For questions, please contact:

- Columbus Public Health – Leslie diDonato at ljdidonato@columbus.gov
- Franklin County Public Health – Niki Lemin at nikilemin@franklincountyohio.gov

Background Information

COVID-19 (novel coronavirus) is a respiratory illness that originated in Wuhan, Hubei, China in December 2019. It has since spread internationally to multiple countries, including the United States.

Those most at-risk for COVID-19 are people who have recently traveled to countries with sustained spread, including China, Iran, Italy, Japan and South Korea, or people who have been in close contact with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19. Learn more.

What Public Health Is Doing

Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health are working together and with the Ohio Department of Health to monitor the situation, and to plan an appropriate response. This includes working with ODH to implement the CDC’s self-quarantine and self-monitoring protocol for travelers returning from mainland China for 14 days. Learn more.

What You Can Do

The CDC does not recommend any additional precautions for the general public at this time beyond the usual steps that help to prevent the spread of illness and the flu, such as proper hand washing, covering coughs/sneeze with your arm, staying home when sick, and avoiding exposure to others who are sick.

The general public can also help by preventing the spread of misinformation about COVID-19, and by fighting fear and stigma with the understanding that you cannot tell if someone is at risk for spreading COVID-19 based on how they look. Treat everyone with compassion, kindness and respect. Learn more.