

COVID-19 Public Call Center Script

3/11/2020

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GENERAL INFORMATION

What is COVID 19?

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by a novel (new) coronavirus that was first detected in China and has now been detected internationally, including the United States.

Why is there so much concern about COVID-19?

Because this is a new virus, no one has immunity, and there is currently no vaccine for COVID-19.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

- Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure:
 - Fever
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath

Should people get the pneumonia vaccine since it appears people with COVID-19 are at a greater risk of developing pneumonia?

- Check with your doctor or health care provider about your vaccine status and what vaccines you are recommended to receive.

What type of PPE should school custodial staff wear when they clean the building after a student develops a confirmed case of COVID-19?

- The CDC has developed general environmental cleaning guidance: [CDC Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations](#),

I have symptoms similar to COVID-19, should I get tested?

- The symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to other seasonal illnesses like the flu or a cold, so just having symptoms doesn't mean you have the disease. Reach out to your doctor or health care provider if you aren't feeling well for guidance?

Is the state ordering retirement homes or long term care centers to lock down?

- IDPH has published guidance for long term care centers at <https://idph.iowa.gov/Portals/1/userfiles/7/LTC%20Guidance.pdf>.

Are people that test positive being tracked to see where they go when they are supposed to self quarantine?

- People living in Iowa who have been diagnosed with laboratory confirmed COVID-19 are monitored by state and local public health officials.

How long is a person contagious with COVID-19?

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-prevent-spread.html>

How long can the virus survive on surfaces?

- [Environmental Cleaning Guidance 3.10.20](#)

How do I know what the visitor restrictions are for hospitals and long term care facilities?

- Please call the facility you intend to visit and ask about visitor restrictions.

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

- The virus that causes COVID-19 is spreading from 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.

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

- 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 disease.
 - Someone who has been released from isolation or quarantine for COVID-19 is not considered a risk for spreading the virus to others.

How does COVID-19 spread?

- From person-to-person by respiratory droplets, just like seasonal flu.
- It is believed the virus spreads when someone who is infected coughs on another person and the droplets land on the other person's nose or mouth.

How can I protect myself and my loved ones against COVID-19?

- **Clean** – clean your hands with soap and water, or use a hand sanitizing gel when water is not available.
- **Cover** – cover your coughs and sneezes with your sleeve or elbow.
- **Contain** – Contain germs by staying home when ill. Don't go to school, work, shopping or other outside activities while you are sick.

MASS GATHERINGS RELATED QUESTIONS

Should mass gatherings/large public events be cancelled?

IDPH does **not** recommend cancelling mass gatherings/large public events at this time.

- Examples of mass gatherings/large public events include church services, sporting events, concerts, social and cultural celebrations, weddings, conferences, etc.

I am attending a mass gathering/large public event. Should I wear a mask?

- IDPH does **not** recommend wearing a mask to mass gatherings.

If I am sick can I attend a mass gathering, as long as I stay away from other people and do not cough or sneeze on them?

- **No**, sick people should stay home. Sick people can give the COVID-19 and other viruses to other people by sneezing or coughing on or near them.

I am attending a mass gathering/large public event. How can I protect myself from getting sick?

- Avoid being near sick people and people who are coughing or sneezing.
- Regularly wash your hands with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand gel (especially after coughing or sneezing).
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with your hands. Germs spread this way.

I am planning a mass gathering/large public event. What can I do to protect other people attending?

- Make sure you, and others around you cover your nose and mouth when you cough and sneeze.
- If possible, provide education for the attendees about staying home if they are sick. This can be done through newsletters, newspaper notices, website postings, text messages or other communication methods before the event takes place.
- Make hand washing facilities with soap and running water, hand gels and tissues widely available at the event.
- Consider providing alternative options and venues for participation (e.g., remote web-based viewing sites) to reduce the risk of disease spread.

What does it mean to avoid mass gathering?

- Mass gatherings are where many individuals are gathering in a place where disease could be spread easily. Decisions about cancelling gatherings of people will be made based on local outbreak activity. IDPH or local public health may make recommendations to cancel events if there are many people getting sick in an area. If you feel sick, you should not attend a mass gathering.

Should I go to church, the movies, sporting events, or conferences?

- Decisions about cancelling gatherings of people will be made based on local outbreak activity. IDPH or local public health may make recommendations to cancel events if there are many people getting sick in an area. If you are sick, you should stay home. If you start to feel sick while you are at an event, you should go home. Social distancing (staying away from individuals that could be sick) is an effective way to limit the spread of disease.

QUESTIONS ABOUT TAKING CARE OF SICK PEOPLE

Who should take care of the sick person?

- Have only one adult in the home take care of the sick person. People at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 should not be the designated caretaker. If the person becomes severely ill, a health care provider should be consulted on the appropriateness of bringing the sick person in to be seen.

How can the caretaker protect themselves?

- Clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub frequently, including after every contact with the sick person, the person's room or bathroom, and after handling used tissues or laundry.
- Avoid being within six feet of the sick person if possible.
- If holding small children who are sick, place their chin on your shoulder so that they will not cough in your face.

How can other household members be protected?

- Sick people should not care for infants or other people at high risk for complications of COVID-19.
- The sick person should stay in a room separate from family members and away from the common areas of the house. (For example, a spare bedroom with its own bathroom, if that's possible.) Keep the bedroom door closed.
- If possible, sick persons should use a separate bathroom. This bathroom should be cleaned daily with regular household disinfectant.
- Other household members, especially those at high risk for complications of COVID-19, should not come within six feet of the person who is ill.
- Have the sick person wear a facemask, if available and tolerable, if they need to be in a common area of the house near other persons.
- All persons in the household should clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub frequently, including after every contact with the sick person or the person's room or bathroom.
- Use paper towels for drying hands after hand washing, or have separate cloth towels for each person in the household. For example, have different colored towels for each person.
- Maintaining good ventilation in common areas of the house (e.g., keeping windows open in restrooms, kitchen, keep vent going in bathroom, etc.).

How should household cleaning, laundry and waste disposal be handled?

- Throw away tissues and other disposable items used by the sick person in the trash. Wash your hands after touching used tissues and similar waste.
- Keep surfaces (especially bedside tables, surfaces in the bathroom and toys for children) clean by washing or wiping them down with a household disinfectant.
- Wash things like bed sheets and towels using household laundry soap, and machine wash and dry on the hottest setting the material will allow.
- Clean your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer right after handling dirty laundry.
- Wash eating utensils in a dishwasher or by hand with hot water and soap.
- Linens, eating utensils and dishes used by sick people do not need to be cleaned separately, but should not be used by others until washed thoroughly.

How can I protect people outside the home?

- The sick person should not have visitors other than caregivers. A phone call is safer than a visit.
- Unless necessary for medical care or an emergency, sick people should stay home and away from others as much as possible, and until at least 24 hours after fever is gone. (Fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine).

What do I do if I think I have COVID-19 or have been exposed?

- Individuals (general public) calling with signs or symptoms of Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) or other personal health needs should call their own primary care provider or Local Public Health Agency. If you do not have health insurance or a primary health care provider contact your local public health agency.
- You can call your healthcare provider to determine if you need to be seen. If you have mild symptoms, your healthcare provider may recommend you stay home and call again if symptoms worsen.

What if my doctor's office doesn't want to see me?

- You can call your healthcare provider to determine if you need to be seen. If you have mild symptoms, your healthcare provider may recommend you stay home and call again if symptoms worsen.
- If you have significant concerns or you don't have a primary healthcare provider, contact your local public health agency.

TRAVEL

What is public health doing for persons who return to the U.S. from countries other than China and Iran?

- At this time, only persons who have traveled from China or Iran are being placed into a 14-day quarantine.
- People returning to the US from other areas are not required to be placed into quarantine. If someone has traveled to a geographic area with sustained transmission, other than China or Iran, they should monitor for symptoms of fever, cough and shortness of breath for 14 days after travel.
- If someone becomes symptomatic with fever, cough and shortness of breath within 14 days after travel, they should call a health care provider and let them know about their symptoms and travel so that the health care provider can make arrangements for them to safely be seen.

If someone who traveled is staying or living with someone else, are the other persons in the household required to stay home and away from others too?

- No, other people in the household who did not travel and were not exposed to a known positive COVID-19 case would be able to continue to attend their normal activities.

Should people who are traveling to other countries wear a facemask?

- The CDC does not recommend that people in the general population wear a facemask in public.

TESTING

Who can be tested for COVID-19?

- Only persons who meet the CDC criteria for testing can be tested.
- At this time, the only people who can be tested for COVID-19 are:
 - symptomatic people (i.e. have a fever, cough or shortness of breath) and close contact with a laboratory-confirmed case of COVID-19 within 14 days of symptom onset **OR**
 - symptomatic people requiring hospitalization and a history of travel from affected geographic areas within 14 days of symptom onset **OR**
 - symptomatic people with severe acute lower respiratory illness (e.g., pneumonia, ARDS) requiring hospitalization and without alternative explanatory diagnosis (e.g., influenza) and no source of exposure identified.