

2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Fact Sheet

Updated: 3/18/2020

2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is a new kind of coronavirus that was first detected in China and has now been detected in many countries, including in the United States and in Iowa.

There are seven different coronaviruses known to infect humans, including four very common, more mild viruses that cause illness similar to the common cold. Healthcare providers test for these common coronaviruses routinely and no public health measures are needed to address these common coronaviruses. Three of the seven coronaviruses are rare and can cause more severe illness, including the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

Symptoms:

Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure and can include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

Reported illnesses have ranged from people being mildly sick to people being severely ill and dying. Older patients and those with chronic medical conditions may be at higher risk for severe illness.

There is currently no specific treatment for COVID-19. People with COVID-19 receive supportive care to help relieve symptoms.

Testing:

More testing is becoming available each day through the State Hygienic Laboratory (SHL) and through private labs. Your health care provider will make the determination on whether you need a test, and can consult with public health if they have questions. Testing guidance is available here: <http://shl.uiowa.edu/dcd/covid19.xml>

Additional testing resources here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/testing.html>

Spread:

The virus is spread mainly from person-to-person between people who are in close contact with one another (about 6 feet). Spread occurs from respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes that land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. It may be possible to get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

Prevention:

CDC has issued travel warnings for some affected countries, with warning levels varying based on the risk to travelers. The Iowa Department of Public Health recommends that Iowans returning from countries with Level 3 CDC travel warnings voluntarily self-isolate for 14 days following their return and monitor for fever and other symptoms.

Individuals who have cleared their 14 day self-isolation or public health monitoring are not at risk for spreading COVID-19.

There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. People can help prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses to others by covering their coughs and sneezes, cleaning their hands frequently, and staying home when ill. CDC does not recommend face masks for the general public.

Contact information

Iowa Department of Public Health
Please call 211 for general questions