

Resources from Texas 2-1-1 United Way of the Brazos Valley BC

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FAQ: COVID-19 Disease Information, Current Situation, and Animals

Resource number: 29851998

A program of: Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Description

Update 3/15/2020 at 8:00 PM: Callers with an area code outside of Texas will not be routed to the DSHS COVID-19 Call Center.

Disease Basics

Q: What is Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

A: The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a new respiratory virus first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China.

Q: What is a novel coronavirus?

A: There are a few known coronaviruses that cause mild illness in humans. A novel coronavirus is a new coronavirus that has not been previously identified. The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is not the same as the coronaviruses that commonly circulate among humans and cause mild illness.

Q: What is the source of COVID-19?

A: Public health officials and partners are working hard to identify the source of the COVID-19. Coronaviruses are among a large family of viruses, some causing illness in people and others that circulate among animals, including camels, cats, and bats. SARS, another coronavirus that emerged to infect people, came from civet cats, while MERS, another coronavirus that emerged to infect people, came from camels. The recently emerged COVID-19 is not the same as the coronavirus that causes Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) or the coronavirus that causes Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

Q: How does the virus spread?

A: Most often, spread from person-to-person happens among close contacts (about six feet). Person-to-person spread is thought to occur mainly via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes, similar to how influenza and other respiratory pathogens spread. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. This virus probably originally emerged from an animal source but is now spreading from person to person. It's important to note that how easily a virus spreads person-to-person can vary. Some viruses are highly contagious (like measles), while other viruses are less so. Investigations regarding this novel coronavirus are ongoing.

Q: Can the COVID-19 virus spread through drinking water?

A: The COVID-19 virus has not been detected in drinking water. Conventional water treatment methods that use filtration and disinfection, such as those in most municipal drinking water systems, should remove or inactivate the virus that causes COVID-19.

Prevention

Q: How can I help protect myself and others?

A: There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19 infection. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to this virus. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, including:

-Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

-Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, you can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains 60%–95% alcohol.

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- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Stay home when you are sick
- CDC Facemask recommendations:
 - CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory viruses, including COVID-19.
 - Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of Coronavirus Disease 2019, to protect others from the risk of getting infected.
 - The use of facemasks is also crucial for health workers and people who are taking care of someone in a close setting (at home or in a health care facility).

Q: What should I do if I had close contact with someone who has COVID-19?

A: If you have had close contact with someone who has COVID-19, call your healthcare provider immediately and describe the contact you have had.

Medical Information

Q: What are the symptoms and complications that COVID-19 can cause?

A: Current symptoms reported for patients with COVID-19 have included mild to severe respiratory illness with fever, cough, and difficulty breathing.

Q: Should I be tested for COVID-19?

A: If you develop symptoms such as fever, cough, and/or difficulty breathing, and have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19 or have recently traveled from an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19, stay home and call your healthcare provider. Older patients and individuals who have severe underlying medical conditions or are immunocompromised should contact their healthcare provider early, even if their illness is mild. If you have severe symptoms, such as persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion or inability to arouse, or bluish lips of face, contact your healthcare provider or emergency room and seek care immediately. Your doctor will determine if you have signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and whether you should be tested.

Q: How do you test a person for COVID-19?

A: At this time, testing samples for COVID-19 that are intended for testing at public health labs can be obtained by local healthcare professionals from persons suspected of having coronavirus. Healthcare professionals should work closely with their local or regional health department to receive approval for public health testing. New commercial testing is now available as well. Persons interested in commercial lab testing should contact their provider to inquire about testing.

Q: Can a person test negative and later test positive for COVID-19?

A: Using the CDC-developed diagnostic test, a negative result means that the virus that causes COVID-19 was not found in the person's sample at that point in time. In the early stages of infection, it is possible the virus will not be detected. For COVID-19, a negative test result for a sample collected while a person has symptoms likely means that the COVID-19 virus is not causing their current illness.

Q: What should I do if I am a medical provider and I have a sample from a patient?

A: Healthcare providers should contact their local health department, or regional health department (in the absence of a local health authority), to report the sample and receive guidance and approval to package and ship the sample to a laboratory. To contact your local health department, you can visit the Local Health Entities page on the DSHS website: dshs.texas.gov/regions/2019-nCoV-Local-Health-Entities.

Please visit dshs.state.tx.us/lab for interim guidance for handling and shipping samples under the COVID-19 Specimen Collection and Submission Instructions link.

Q: Is there lab testing in Texas?

There are public health labs as well as commercial/private labs that are processing test samples in Texas. If you are ill and think you may need testing for COVID-19, you should call your physician.

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Q: Where can I find guidance documents?

A: All medical guidance can be found on the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) website at dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus. DSHS will make continuous updates as they receive guidance from the CDC.

Current Situation

Q: What is DSHS doing about COVID-19?

A: This is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation, and the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) will continue to provide updated information as it becomes available. DSHS is working 24/7 to protect people's health.

Q: Has anyone been infected in the United States?

A: Yes. To stay up to date on COVID-19 activity in the United States, go to cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV. For the latest information on cases in Texas, go to DSHS Coronavirus website at dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus.

Q: Am I at risk for novel coronavirus from a package or product shipping from China?

A: There is still a lot that is unknown about the newly emerged Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and how it spreads. Two other coronaviruses have emerged previously to cause severe illness in people (MERS and SARS). COVID-19 is more genetically related to SARS than MERS, but both are betacoronaviruses with their origins in bats. While we don't know for sure that this virus will behave the same way as SARS and MERS, we can use the information from both of these earlier coronaviruses to guide us. In general, because of poor survivability of these coronaviruses on surfaces, there is likely a very low risk of spread from products or packaging shipped over a period of days or weeks at ambient temperatures.

COVID-19 and Animals

Q: What about animals or animal products imported from China?

A: At this time, CDC does not have any evidence to suggest that animals or animal products imported from China pose a risk for spreading COVID-19 in the United States.

Q: Should I be concerned about pets or other animals and COVID-19?

A: While this virus seems to have emerged from an animal source, it is now spreading from person to person. CDC recommends that people traveling to China avoid animals both live and dead, but there is no reason to think that any animals or pets in the United States might be a source of infection with this new coronavirus.

Q: Should I avoid contact with pets or other animals if I am sick?

A: Do not handle pets or other animals while sick. Although there have not been reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19, several types of coronaviruses can cause illness in animals and spread between animals and people. Until we know more, avoid contact with animals and wear a facemask if you must be around animals or care for a pet. Source of information: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

For further information and guidance, please visit dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus

For public health and medical questions, please email coronavirus@dshs.texas.gov

Phone Numbers

DSHS COVID-19 Call Center
1-877-570-9779

Website

<https://www.dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/>

Email

coronavirus@dshs.texas.gov

Site Information

Location

Description of Location

Mailing Address

Disabilities Access

Hours

Call Center, website, and email available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Public Transport (Bus and other)

Program Information

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Eligibility	Open to the public
Languages Offered	English
Payment Options	
Fees	None
Application Process	Record is informational only. If caller's need is not addressed by any FAQs, refer to email or DSHS COVID-19 Call Center.
Documents Required	None
Normal Wait Time	
Capacity	
Volunteer Opportunities	No

Coverage Areas

TX - Statewide
Statewide

Main Contact

Name
Title
Phone
Email

Senior Contact

Name
Title
Phone
Email

Custom Fields