

PRINT-Coronavirus Risk Low for Most  
*OSF HealthCare Still Taking Precautions*

OSF HealthCare leaders have been closely monitoring all developments with the latest coronavirus and despite the World Health Organization's declaration that it is now a global health emergency, and now with the U.S. government also declaring a health emergency, at least one infection prevention expert says the risk to most of the population still remains low.

The new coronavirus has been declared a global emergency by the World Health Organization, as the outbreak continues to spread outside China. "The main reason for this declaration is not what is happening in China but what is happening in other countries," said WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

Lori Grooms, director of Infection Prevention for OSF HealthCare, says human coronaviruses are common throughout the world and commonly cause mild to moderate illness in people worldwide. However, the emergence of novel (new) coronaviruses, such as SARS and MERS, have been associated with more severe respiratory illness.

With the latest coronavirus, now being referred to as 2019 nCoV (for the year it was first reported, n for novel, and COV for coronavirus), she says most people are not at risk.

"There should be minimal concern for most of our population with the fact that most of these cases have been brought over from China. They all had related travel from Wuhan, China," Grooms stressed.

**Updated:** The CDC and the Illinois Department of Public Health confirmed diagnosis of 2019-nCoV infection in a person in Chicago who did not travel from China, but who had close contact with a previously confirmed patient who did. This is the first instance of person-to-person spread of 2019-nCoV in the United States, something which was expected to occur. The government's declaration of a public health emergency in the U.S. allows the government to tap additional resources to send to states, such as emergency funding and if necessary drugs or equipment from the national stockpile, and to suspend certain legal requirements.

President Donald Trump has signed an order that will temporarily bar entry to the U.S. of foreign nationals believed to be a risk of transmitting the virus and 195 people are under two week quarantine at a military base in California after being evacuated Wednesday from Wuhan, China.

Grooms says the virus has a 14-day incubation period, meaning symptoms would develop within 14 days of exposure. A person's risk would be evaluated using a two-pronged approach.

"I have to have traveled to Wuhan, China and I have to have respiratory symptoms. So, I have to have a fever, a cough, shortness of breath, even potentially diarrhea but it's the two of those that go hand in hand that put me at risk for having this novel coronavirus and needing to be isolated and tested," she explained.

Since the outbreak was first reported in December, OSF HealthCare has been monitoring and instituting recommended Center for Disease Control and Prevention protocols.

Grooms says OSF HealthCare is taking a cautious approach to infection prevention and control so patients suspected of having the novel coronavirus would be asked to wear a surgical mask as soon as they are identified and they would be evaluated in a private room with the door closed, ideally an airborne infection isolation room if available. Those are available in OSF HealthCare hospitals.

In addition to standard fluid-resistant gowns and gloves, providers treating a suspected patient would wear a National Institutes of Safety and Health (NIOSH)-certified disposable N95 mask that provides tighter fit and more protection from smaller, airborne particles as well as eye protection such as goggles or a face shield.

There are other protocols for taking test samples and reporting all suspected cases to the local health department. Eventually state public health officials would decide if the sample should be tested for the novel strain at a state-certified lab.

Even though patients have died from the virus, the first 17 people were largely older men, many with underlying health problems. Grooms says treatment would only involve antibiotics if patients develop pneumonia caused by a bacterial infection.

"Usually it's just managing their symptoms, giving them fever reduction medication, helping them with breathing treatment; worse-case scenario ventilators," according to Grooms.

If you have been in Wuhan, China in the last two weeks or know someone who might have been exposed to the novel coronavirus AND you have symptoms, please call ahead to your health care provider or immediate care center such as [OSF Urgo](#) or [OSF PromptCare](#) so they can make arrangements for you to be assessed.