FAQs *for* **Patients:**
COVID-19 (Coronavirus)
Updated: March 3, 2020

What is the coronavirus?
Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that can cause illness in both animals and people. The 2003 SARS outbreak, also known as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, is a well-known coronavirus. In January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced a new coronavirus outbreak, now called COVID-19, which was first detected in China. While there is limited information about COVID-19 currently available, our number-one priority is to support the health and safety of our patients.

How does COVID-19 spread?
This is an emerging virus, so there are still many unknowns. Currently, it is unclear how easily or effectively the virus is spreading between people. As with all respiratory viruses, it is advisable to limit close contact (within six feet) with an infected person. Coronaviruses are also spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes, or by touching an infected surface or object and then touching your own mouth, nose or eyes. For the most updated information about COVID-19, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?
Symptoms are similar to an upper respiratory infection and may include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

More cases of COVID-19 are expected to be diagnosed, much like the other epidemics that we have experienced over the last 15 years. But it is important to know that 80% of COVID-19 cases are mild or without symptoms. Like the seasonal flu, COVID-19 infection is more severe in patients with chronic underlying health conditions and the elderly.

What if I think I was exposed to COVID-19?
If you believe you may have been exposed to the virus, it is recommended you avoid public places, including public transportation. Call your local public health agency immediately to ask for guidance prior to making an emergency room visit. This will help limit exposure to the general public.

Is there a treatment for COVID-19?
At present, there is no specific treatment or vaccine for COVID-19. If you become infected, you will receive supportive care to help relieve symptoms. You can help prevent the spread of the virus by following the steps listed on the CDC's coronavirus website at cdc.gov/coronavirus/

How can I protect myself from COVID-19?

Until there are more answers, you are advised to follow good prevention practices, including:

- Washing your hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds or using alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, like your phone or computer
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and then throw the tissue in the trash
- Stay home when you are sick
- While a flu shot does not prevent COVID-19, it's still good to protect yourself against influenza and schedule a flu shot

Will wearing a mask prevent me from getting the virus?

No, surgical masks do not protect people from COVID-19. It's a small virus that can fit through the mask or along the edges where there are gaps. Surgical masks are most effective at controlling spread of the virus from a source or infected person. Surgical masks should not be used by healthy people for "protection" from coronavirus – it will not provide protection and will deplete the limited stock needed for use by sick individuals.

Is there guidance related to international travel?

Currently, the WHO and CDC recommend that travelers avoid all nonessential travel to China, Italy, South Korea, and Iran. This situation is evolving, so please visit the CDC website for the latest guidance.

Are there other things I should do to prepare?

Even though the trajectory of the virus is unknown, the CDC says that now is a good time to assess individual and family preparedness but advised that preparations do not need to go beyond what is needed for a natural disaster or an infrastructure disruption. Preparedness typically includes making a plan, making a kit, and staying informed.

Where can I find more information about COVID-19?

This situation is fluid and evolving quickly. For the latest information, guidance and travel alerts, visit the CDC's COVID-19 homepage and the World Health Organization website. Understanding the facts around the virus will help reduce stigma and panic.

Resources

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - cdc.gov/coronavirus/
- Department of Homeland Security Emergency Preparedness - ready.gov/plan
- World Health Organization COVID-19 - who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019
- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health - publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/
- Orange County Public Health - ochealthinfo.com/phs/about/epidasmt/epi/dip/prevention/novel_coronavirus