Lane County Public Health
COVID-19 (Coronavirus)
Frequently Asked Questions

What is COVID-19?
COVID-19 is a coronavirus. Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that usually cause mild symptoms, like a common cold. Two coronaviruses — Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) — have caused more severe illness. COVID-19 disease is caused by a new strain of the virus that has not previously been seen in humans.

How does COVID-19 spread?
This virus was first detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. The first infections were linked to a live animal market, but the virus is now spreading from person-to-person.

The virus spreads like the flu, when someone who is sick coughs or sneezes close to another person. "Close" means about 6 feet. A person is more likely to make another person sick when they have symptoms like a cough.

Illness develops 2 to 14 days after someone contracts COVID-19. Those symptoms include fever and cough. Seniors and people with underlying health conditions would be at greater risk of severe disease.

It's important to note that person-to-person spread can happen on a continuum. Some viruses are highly contagious (like measles), while other viruses are less so. Currently, it's unclear how easily or sustainably this virus is spreading between people. Learn what is known about the spread of newly emerged coronaviruses.

Can someone who has had COVID-19 spread it 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 Centers for Disease Control (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.

How long someone is actively sick can vary so the decision on when to release someone from isolation is made on a case-by-case basis in consultation with doctors, infection prevention and control experts, and public health officials. The decision involves considering specifics of each situation including disease severity, illness signs and symptoms, and results of laboratory testing for that patient.

Current CDC guidance for when it is OK to release someone from isolation includes meeting all of the following requirements:

- The patient is free from fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- The patient is no longer showing symptoms, including cough.
- The patient has tested negative on at least two consecutive respiratory specimens collected at least 24 hours apart.

Someone who has been released from isolation is not considered to pose a risk of infection to others.

How do I tell the difference between COVID-19 and the flu?
Right now, influenza is still circulating in Oregon. It is a much more likely cause of cough and fever than COVID-19. The symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to flu and other respiratory viral illnesses.

Symptoms can include fever of 100.4 degrees or higher, cough, and shortness of breath. Illness can range from mild to severe. The only way to tell what specific germ is causing illness is through laboratory testing. If a person meets the criteria for COVID-19 testing, providers should contact Lane County Public Health at 541-682-4041.

What should I do if I believe I have been exposed to COVID-19?
If you have symptoms like a cough, fever or breathing problems and you might have been exposed to COVID-19, please contact your health care provider. Your provider will ask you about your symptoms and will decide whether you should be seen in the office.

If the doctor asks you to come in to the clinic, they will likely create a plan for you to enter the facility in a way that avoids being around others, to prevent the spread of illness.

There is information for people who have had close contact with a person confirmed to have, or being evaluated for, COVID-19 available online at the [CDC website](#).

How can I avoid getting sick?
Steps you can take to prevent the spread of flu and the common cold can also help prevent the spread of the coronavirus COVID-19.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- Use hand sanitizer if you don't have access to soap and water.
- Avoid touching your face, especially eyes, nose and mouth.
- Stay home if you are sick. Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes. Throw used tissues in the trash promptly.
- Take care of your health by eating well, getting adequate sleep, exercising and managing stress will also help your body stay resilient.

Should I use a face mask to prevent COVID-19?
There are detailed recommendations for healthcare providers to protect themselves using special types of masks and other equipment.

Outside of healthcare settings, there is no recommendation in the United States for people to wear masks in public spaces. To prevent the spread of respiratory illness, we recommend all people be diligent about washing hands, covering coughs and sneezes, staying home when sick, and getting the seasonal influenza vaccine.

How can we help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our community?
The CDC has provided guidance for how individual households, schools, childcares, colleges/ universities, community- and faith-based organizations, and workplaces can participate in keeping our community healthy. Everyone has a role to play! Because COVID-19 is a new (novel) virus, there is no vaccine available to prevent it, or specific medicine to treat it. That is why it is important to be prepared and practice these methods (sometimes called "non-pharmaceutical interventions") to prevent the spread of the illness.

Updated on March 5, 2020

What do we mean by "presumptive" cases?
When Lane County Public Health mentions a presumptive case of COVID-19 that means a person has been tested here in Oregon and the test result was positive for COVID-19. However, before the case can be confirmed it must also be tested by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). This is common practice in the medical field and especially important right now because COVID-19 is a new disease in humans. If the CDC test also confirms that COVID-19 is present the case will then be referred to as confirmed.

Currently, there are three (3) positive cases in Oregon. One (1) is confirmed by the CDC. None are in Lane County.

What are the testing requirements?
To be tested for COVID-19 (Coronavirus) a person must meet the minimum requirements of a fever, lower respiratory issues or contact with a confirmed case or exposure location.

In the United States, every medical laboratory test must be approved by the Food and Drug Administration, and that usually happens after years of development. Because COVID-19 is so new in humans the tests are also very new and have not yet been granted full FDA approval. The FDA has granted an emergency use authorization for COVID-19 tests only for people who meet the minimum requirements above.

How is Lane County Public Health monitoring people who have traveled outside the United States recently?
We are working closely with the CDC's Office of Global Migration and Quarantine to understand who may have traveled outside the United States and to areas of concern recently.

It is important to understand that Lane County Public Health follows all patient privacy guidelines and does not share patient information with other governmental agencies unless there is a direct medical need and legal authority to do so. Patient privacy is a priority of Lane County Public Health.

Are there certain people who are more likely to get COVID-19 (Coronavirus)?
No. COVID-19 shows no preference in how it spreads and it can be contracted by anyone regardless of age, gender, race or ethnicity.

People with weakened immune systems, people over 65 and children under 2 years old may experience more severe symptoms and consequences if they contract COVID-19 because their immune systems are not fully functional.

How will Lane County Public Health address COVID-19 in our unhoused population?
Lane County Public Health has protocols in place to care for unhoused individuals should the need arise. We are in active communication with our social service partners regarding additional planning, as well as sharing information and planning resources with other agencies around the state.

Is Lane County Public Health recommending canceling events or meetings?
Not at this time. We are closely monitoring the situation and will reconsider whether to recommend cancelations if a case is confirmed in Lane County.

I have a child in a Lane County school. What do I need to know?
This resource from the Oregon Health Authority and the Oregon Department of Education addresses questions specifically for families with children in schools, such as "What do I do if my child is sick?" and "Should my child wear a mask?"
More information is available at the Oregon Department of Education COVID-19 resource page.

What about testing for the novel coronavirus?
If you feel like you need to see a doctor, call your healthcare provider to discuss whether or not you need to be seen. If you need urgent medical attention, call 911.

Your provider will consult with the local public health department to determine if testing is necessary. If testing is necessary, your doctor will take samples and talk to you about next steps.

Samples are sent to the Oregon State Public Health Lab for testing – the only lab able to test for COVID-19 in Oregon. The Oregon State Public Health Lab will test for COVID-19. Your provider and public health will be notified of the results.

If the test shows presence of the infection, the Oregon Health Authority will announce this as a presumptive case. The samples will be sent to the Centers for Disease Control for confirmation.

Not everyone who is sick needs to be tested. Your health care provider and public health department will determine if testing is necessary.

Is it safe to use products shipped from China?
There is no evidence of transmission of COVID-19 from imported goods or packages and there have been no cases in the United States associated with imported goods.

In general, coronaviruses do not survive well on surfaces, so health officials believe the risk of contracting COVID-19 from packages or products shipped from China is extremely low.

I'm concerned about recent travel.
The following is based on the information we have at this time and will be updated if we learn more.

If you have returned from an area with widespread transmission of COVID-19 (as of March 3, 2020, locations include China, Iran, Italy and South Korea), and you develop symptoms like a fever, cough or breathing problems within 14 days, please call your doctor. They will ask questions about your travel history and your symptoms and will determine if you need to be tested for COVID-19.

Some areas of the United States, including on the West Coast, have reported cases of COVID-19, however, there is no evidence that the coronavirus is spreading widely in those communities. Therefore, recent travel to Portland, Seattle, or other areas of Washington State do not significantly increase your risk of contracting COVID-19.

I'm concerned about upcoming travel.
The CDC is monitoring the spread of COVID-19 worldwide and how countries are responding to it. Check the CDC travel information for guidance on international travel.

As of March 3, 2020, the CDC has not issued any travel notices for any parts of the United States. The best way to protect your health while traveling is to avoid sick people and to wash your hands frequently.

If you are traveling to attend a conference, concert or other large gathering, please contact the event organizer for information about the status of the event.

What are other trusted sources of information related to COVID-19?
[Oregon Health Authority (OHA)](#)
[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)](#)
[World Health Organization (WHO)](#)