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HEALTH

Update on the 2019 Novel Corona Virus (COVID-19)

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COVID-19 is an infection caused by a type of virus called a coronavirus. It first appeared in late 2019 in the city of Wuhan, China. This infection was called “2019 novel coronavirus” until the World Health Organization (WHO) gave it a new name on February 11, 2020.



As of mid-February, 2020, the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 is almost 47,000 worldwide, with 46,550 coming from China. There is 1 confirmed death in cases outside China and 1368 deaths in China. In the United States, there are now 15 confirmed cases of COVID-19 across 7 states, most of which are in California.

In comparison, for the flu season beginning Oct 1, 2019 to Feb 15, 2020, there are an estimated 30 million cases of influenza in the US alone, about 400,000 hospitalizations and 30,000 deaths attributed to influenza in this country.

Nonetheless, experts are following the epidemiology of COVID-19 very carefully because it is a novel virus (new virus) and has great potential for rapid spread. Symptoms usually start a few days after a person is infected with the virus. But in some people it can take even longer for symptoms to appear.

Symptoms can include:

- Fever higher than 100.4°F (38°C)
- Cough
- Trouble breathing
- Feeling tired
- Muscle aches

Some people have no symptoms, or only have mild symptoms. But in other people, COVID-19 can lead to serious problems like pneumonia, not getting enough oxygen, or even death. This is more common in people who have other health problems.

If your doctor or nurse suspects you have COVID-19, they will do tests on samples of fluid taken from inside your nose and mouth. They might also test fluid from your lungs, as well as your urine and stool (bowel movements). These tests can all show if you have COVID-19 or another

infection. Your doctor might also order a chest X-ray to check your lungs.

Many people with COVID-19 have only mild illness and can rest at home until they get better. If you have more severe illness, you might need to stay in the hospital, possibly in the intensive care unit (also called the “ICU”). There is

no specific treatment for the infection, but the doctors and nurses in the hospital can monitor and support your breathing and other body functions.

Like many viral illnesses, prevention is key. Most experts recommend avoiding travel to China if it is not necessary. In the emergency rooms where I work and possibly exposed to tourists from all over the world, we are required to be fitted with special N-95 masks that limit the passage of air droplets. Universal precautions like being careful around body fluids and wearing gowns and gloves go a long way. In our own homes, it is also advisable to clean things that are touched often like, door knobs, counters, computers and phones. Of course, the best prevention is to wash our hands often with soap and water.

Questions? Please contact:

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