Ford County Public Health Department

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What You Should Know About Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

What is COVID-19

Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel coronavirus, a new strain that has been identified in humans. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in people and many different species of animals. COVID-19 has spread throughout the world, including the United States. It was declared a public health emergency for the U.S. on January 31, 2020. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization announced that the spread of coronavirus qualifies as a global pandemic.

What is the current risk?

For the majority of people, the immediate risk of being exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to be low. There is not widespread circulation in most communities in the United States and there are no known cases in Ford County. While the risk of exposure to Ford County residents continues to remain low, there are certain individuals and populations who are more at risk getting COVID-19.

This includes:

- Vulnerable populations such as older people and people of all ages with severe underlying health conditions — like heart disease, lung disease and diabetes.
- Travelers returning from affected international locations where community spread is occurring.
- Healthcare workers caring for patients with COVID-19.
- Close contacts of persons with COVID-19.
- People in places where ongoing community spread of the virus that causes COVID-19 has been reported.

How is COVID-19 diagnosed?

Diagnosis occurs through laboratory testing of respiratory specimens and serum (blood). Physicians, not FCPHD, will collect samples for testing. Contact your healthcare provider should you suspect you have been exposed to COVID-19.

What to do if you suspect you have COVID-19

COVID-19 symptoms are similar to those of influenza (the flu), and the flu and other viruses are still highly prevalent. COVID-19 symptoms include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. If you think you have been exposed to COVID-19 and develop symptoms, follow the CDC's steps below to help prevent the disease from spreading to people in your home and community.

- Stay home except to get medical care. People who are mildly ill with COVID-19 are able to isolate at home during their illness. You should restrict activities outside your home, except for getting medical care.
- Call ahead before visiting your doctor and tell them that you may have COVID-19. This will help the healthcare provider's office take steps to keep other people from getting infected or exposed.
- As much as possible, stay in a specific room and away from other people and pets/animals in your home. Use a separate bathroom, if available.

Should you wear a mask?

CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19. You should only wear a mask if a healthcare professional recommends it. A facemask should be used by people who have COVID-19 and are showing symptoms. This is to protect others from the risk of getting infected. The use of facemasks is also crucial for health workers and other people who are taking care of someone infected with COVID-19 in close settings (at home or in a health care facility).

For more information about COVID-19, including risk, prevention and treatment, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website. Additionally, Illinoisans can contact the Illinois Novel Coronavirus Hotline at 1-800-889-3931 twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, or email DPH.SICK@ILLINOIS.GOV to get their questions answered. Residents can also follow FCPHD's Facebook page or visit FCPHD's website.