

MID-BERGEN REGIONAL HEALTH COMMISSION

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Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

While as of March 5 we have only had one confirmed case of the disease in New Jersey, we expect the number of cases to increase, even though the overall risk of serious illness from the disease is low. Most patients who are infected will have mild upper respiratory symptoms including fever, nasal congestion and cough. Some of these people may develop pneumonia and some will require hospitalization. A small percentage of the more severe cases may unfortunately result in death.

Current research shows that a majority of children with COVID-19 will have a mild respiratory illness, or no symptoms at all. Unfortunately, it is the elderly, and those with chronic medical conditions that will suffer the most serious consequences.

As with all patients that develop respiratory illness along with a fever, it is recommended to stay at home for 48 hours, or until their symptoms are better. Anyone who develops shortness of breath should seek medical care or call 911. If you call 911 inform them that you have severe illness, and whether or not you have recently returned from China, Italy, Iran, or South Korea.

Local Health Departments in New Jersey have been monitoring travelers returning from China since early February for symptoms of COVID-19. Your local health department, Mid Bergen Regional Health Commission, in partnership with the HARP nursing agency have been following guidance from the CDC, and the New Jersey Department of Health as it is updated.

As of March 4, in addition to people returning from China, travelers from other countries including Iran, Italy, and South Korea are being asked to stay at home for a period of 14 days from the time they left these countries, and to self-monitor their symptoms and temperature.

The New Jersey Department of Health has sent out guidance for the general public, schools, daycare centers, Long Term Care facilities, and workplaces.

Since we do expect more cases to inevitably appear in our Region, we are working on preparedness plans. All entities that deal with the community should have emergency plans in place to deal with preventing transmission of the disease, as well as contingency plans should there be large number of employee absences.

Testing of suspected cases is accomplished through collaboration between Hospitals and the Local Health Departments. Currently only hospitalized patients can be authorized for testing, although we do expect that as more testing kits become available this could change.

Practice proper respiratory illness prevention measures as is the procedure for all respiratory illness prevention.

For more information:

New Jersey 24-hour Coronavirus hotline: 1800-222-1222

New Jersey Department of Health website: www.nj.gov/health