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HEALTH ADVISORY: Guidance for clinicians for identification of cases of a novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) from Wuhan City, China

January 18, 2020

Dear Colleague:

I want to provide some important information on the pneumonia outbreak in Wuhan City, China caused by a novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV). On January 17, 2020, CDC issued [updated interim guidance](https://emergency.cdc.gov/han/han00426.asp) (<https://emergency.cdc.gov/han/han00426.asp>) to assist healthcare providers in the identification, evaluation, and reporting of a Patient Under Investigation (PUI) for 2019-nCoV in the United States.

To help us identify suspected cases of (2019-nCoV) we are asking you to do the following:

1. Obtain a detailed **travel history** for patients with fever and acute respiratory illness.
 - Ask patients if they have a history of travel from Wuhan City, China -or- close contact with a confirmed case of 2019-nCoV or a Patient Under Investigation (PUI) for 2019-nCoV
2. If a patient meets the criteria of a Patient Under Investigation (see next page for PUI criteria),
 - Ask the patient to wear a surgical mask as soon as the PUI is identified.
 - Evaluate the patient in a private room with the door closed, ideally in an airborne infection isolation room if available.
 - Use standard, contact, and airborne precautions and eye protection (e.g., goggles or face shield).
 - **Immediately** notify your infection control personnel and Alexandria Health Department (AHD). The AHD epidemiologist on call can be reached **24/7 by calling 571-259-8549**

Next steps for suspected cases:

AHD and Virginia Department of Health will consult with CDC and Virginia's Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services (DCLS) about testing.

- Currently, 2019-nCoV testing is only available at CDC. Three specimen types (lower respiratory, upper respiratory, and serum specimens) are recommended for this testing. If possible, more specimens (e.g., stool, urine) should be collected and stored until CDC determines if these should be tested.

For more information on this rapidly evolving situation, please visit the [CDC Novel Coronavirus 2019 website](https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2020/s0117-nCoV-2019.html) or call Alexandria Health Department Epidemiologist, Christina Chommanard at 703-746-4904. Thank you for all your efforts to keep our community safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

Anne Gaddy, MD, MPH
Deputy Health Director
Alexandria Health Department

Patients in the United States who meet the following criteria should be evaluated as a Patient Under Investigation (PUI) in association with the outbreak of 2019-nCoV in Wuhan City, China.*

Clinical Features	&	Epidemiologic Risk
Fever ¹ and symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough, difficulty breathing)	and	A history of travel from Wuhan City, China in the 14 days before symptom onset. – or – In the last 14 days before symptom onset, close contact ² with a person who is under investigation for 2019-nCoV while that person was ill.
Fever ¹ or symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough, difficulty breathing)	and	In the last 14 days, close contact ² with an ill laboratory-confirmed 2019-nCoV patient.

*Source: CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/clinical-criteria.html>. Please note that these criteria might change as more information becomes available.

¹Fever may not be present in some patients, such as those who are very young, elderly, immunosuppressed, or taking certain fever-lowering medications. Clinical judgment should be used to guide testing of patients in such situations.

²Close contact is defined as—

a) being within approximately 6 feet (2 meters), or within the room or care area, of a novel coronavirus case for a prolonged period of time while not wearing recommended personal protective equipment or PPE (e.g., gowns, gloves, NIOSH-certified disposable N95 respirator, eye protection); close contact can include caring for, living with, visiting, or sharing a health care waiting area or room with a novel coronavirus case. – or –

b) having direct contact with infectious secretions of a novel coronavirus case (e.g., being coughed on) while not wearing recommended personal protective equipment.

See [CDC's Interim Healthcare Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Patients Under Investigation for 2019 Novel Coronavirus \(https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control.html)

Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) Background: Wuhan City, located about 700 miles south of Beijing, is a major domestic and international transport hub. With the Chinese New Year starting on January 25, more travel from the area is expected. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that can cause disease ranging from the common cold to severe disease (e.g., Middle-East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)). More than 40 confirmed 2019-nCoV cases in China and three exported cases in Thailand and Japan have been identified. Signs and symptoms include fever, cough, difficulty breathing, and bilateral lung infiltrates on chest radiograph. Most patients reported exposure to a large market in Wuhan City that sells seafood and live animals, suggesting possible animal-to-person transmission. There are no reports of infections among healthcare workers or sustained person-to-person transmission in the community, but limited person-to-person transmission cannot be ruled out. There are no cases in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) considers the current risk of 2019-nCoV infection to the American public to be low based on available information. As a precaution, entry screening is being implemented starting January 17 at the three U.S. airports that receive most travelers from Wuhan: Los Angeles (LAX), New York (JFK), and San Francisco (SFO).