



ALEXANDRIA HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Communicable Disease Division

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HEALTH Update 5: Situational Update COVID-19: Change in Criteria to Evaluate PUIs to include other geographical areas with widespread or sustained community transmission including China, Iran, Italy, Japan, and South Korea

February 28, 2020

Dear Colleague:

COVID-19 is continuing to spread globally. The vast majority of cases have occurred in China. However, community spread is being detected in a growing number of countries. Community spread means spread of an illness for which the source of infection is unknown. **Countries with widespread or sustained community spread of COVID-19 include China, Iran, Italy, Japan, and South Korea.** Other countries also have apparent community spread.

As of February 26, 2020, 15 cases of COVID-19 have been detected in the U.S. One of the 15 cases is in a person who reportedly did not have relevant travel history or exposure to another COVID-19 patient. It is possible this could be an instance of community spread of COVID-19.

The current risk of COVID-19 infection to the American public is still considered low. As of today, February 28, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. there are no COVID-19 cases in Virginia.

CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) and VDH (Virginia Department of Health) are preparing for the possibility that this coronavirus will affect communities throughout the United States.

The Alexandria Health Department is asking for your partnership to identify potential cases of COVID-19 and in implementing non-pharmaceutical interventions, which would prevent the virus from spreading in Alexandria.

- Educate patients about handwashing and respiratory etiquette
 - Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands
 - Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough
- Advise your staff to stay home when sick
- Explore options for telehealth options with your patients
- Think ahead: Provide additional training to staff that includes
 - Cross training employees to ensure coverage in case people need to stay home when sick.
 - Separating sick people from healthy people, and sending sick employees home as soon as possible
- Maintain a clean environment; clean frequently touched surfaces such as telephones, keyboards, and doorknobs

Case Identification and Evaluating Patients for COVID-19 (February 28, 2020)

On February 27, CDC revised its information in the [“Criteria to Guide Evaluation of Persons under Investigation \(PUI\) for COVID-19”](#) to include travel to affected areas with widespread or sustained community spread.

VDH will consider testing for those with travel to a location with the CDC travel watch (, alert, or warning (levels 1, 2, or 3) if a person has fever and or lower respiratory symptoms AND

- The person reports being around someone suspected to have COVID-19 in an affected geographical area⁵, or
- The person has fever and signs of lower respiratory illness requiring hospitalization or
- The person reports severe illness requiring hospitalization without an alternative diagnosis, or
- The treating healthcare provider has increased concerns about COVID-19 illness

For the latest travel alert information, please visit: www.cdc.gov/travel

For a patient currently in your office:

If they have traveled from China, Italy, Iran, Japan, South Korea in the past 14 days, or have had close contact with someone with confirmed COVID-19, and they have fever and or respiratory symptoms, immediately call the Alexandria Health Department on-call 24/7 phone 571.259.8549 for consultation

For patients calling to make an appointment and mentions travel to an affected area in the past 14 days, and you or the patient has concerns about COVID19,

1. Obtain the following information
 - Dates of travel
 - Locations of travel
 - Find out if the patient was a close contact of a known COVID-19 case
 - Signs and symptoms of illness
 - Day of symptom onset
 - Instruct the patient to stay at home while you wait for consultation with the local health department
2. Call the Alexandria Health Department for consultation by calling: 703-746-4951

At this time testing can only be performed through coordination with local public health departments and is not commercially available

New [COVID Patient Under Investigation Criteria as of February 27, 2020](#)**

Clinical Features	&	Epidemiologic Risk
Fever ¹ or signs/symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g. cough or shortness of breath)	AND	Any person, including health care workers ² , who has had close contact ³ with a laboratory-confirmed ⁴ COVID-19 patient within 14 days of symptom onset
Fever ¹ and signs/symptoms of a lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough or shortness of breath) requiring hospitalization	AND	A history of travel from affected geographic areas ⁵ within 14 days of symptom onset
Fever ¹ with severe acute lower respiratory illness (e.g., pneumonia, ARDS) requiring hospitalization ⁴ and without alternative explanatory diagnosis (e.g., influenza) ⁵	AND	No source of exposure has been identified

Affected Geographic Areas with Widespread or Sustained Community Transmission
Last updated February 26, 2020

- China
- Iran
- Italy
- Japan
- South Korea

See all [COVID-19 Travel Health Notices](#).

⁵Affected areas are defined as geographic regions where sustained community transmission has been identified. Relevant affected areas will be defined as a country with at least a CDC Level 2 Travel Health Notice. See all [COVID-19 Travel Health Notices](#).

The criteria are intended to serve as guidance for evaluation. In consultation with public health departments, patients should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine the need for testing. Testing may be considered for deceased persons who would otherwise meet the PUI criteria.

For more information on COVID-19, please visit www.cdc.gov/coronavirus
<https://www.alexandriava.gov/Health>
<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/surveillance-and-investigation/novel-coronavirus/>

Here are some answers to questions that you may receive from patients:

Q. Should I wear a face mask to protect myself from COVID-19?

A. CDC does not currently recommend the general American public use a facemask to protect against novel coronavirus. Only healthcare professionals caring for COVID-19 patients, people who are sick with COVID-19, or in some cases people caring for patients who are sick with COVID-19 need precautions like a facemask to help limit their risk of spreading COVID-19.

CDC always recommends everyday preventive actions, like staying home when you are sick and washing hands with soap and water, to help prevent the spread of respiratory illness

Q. How do I prepare myself for a pandemic?

A. During a pandemic, stores may run out of supplies for long periods of time

Store medical supplies to last an extra month NOW

Build up a supply of these items to last for an extra month. Remember to refrigerate those items that need to be kept cool and use the oldest supplies first.

- Prescription medicines for an extra month
- Medical supplies such as blood sugar measuring strips for people with diabetes
- Over-the-counter medicines for fever and pain (such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen)
- Other over-the-counter medicines such as those for diarrhea and cough and cold remedies
- Thermometer
- Soap
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol

Store extra food and household items to last for at least two weeks or more

- Keep a two-week supply of food on hand. Easily stored food items include:
 - ✓ Ready-to-eat canned meat, fish, fruits, vegetables, beans and soups
 - ✓ Protein or fruit bars
 - ✓ Dry cereal and nonfat dry milk
 - ✓ Peanut butter or nuts
 - ✓ Dried fruit
 - ✓ Crackers
 - ✓ Canned juice
 - ✓ Baby food and supplies
 - ✓ Pet food and supplies
- Keep at least two weeks of other necessary supplies, such as diapers, toilet paper and garbage bags.
- Other things you normally use and would need to have on-hand if you could not leave your home for two weeks.

For more information on Pandemic Preparedness for individuals, businesses, and providers:
vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus emergency.cdc.gov pandemicflu.gov

For specific questions please call Alexandria Health Department Epidemiology line at 703-746-4951. Thank you for all your efforts to keep our community safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gaddy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Anne Gaddy, MD, MPH
Deputy Health Director