

# What is the Corona (COVID-19) Virus and how does it spread?

## 1. What is Corona Virus?

The virus causing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), is not the same as the [coronaviruses that commonly circulate among humans](#) and cause mild illness, like the common cold.

## 2. Does the corona virus spread person-to-person?

Yes, the virus can spread from one person to another, most likely through droplets of saliva or mucus carried in the air for up to six feet or so when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Viral particles may be breathed in, land on surfaces that people touch, or be transferred when shaking hands or sharing a drink with someone who has the virus. Often it's obvious if a person is ill, but there are cases where people who do not feel sick have the virus and can spread it.

## 3. What is the incubation period for the coronavirus?

An incubation period is the time between being exposed to a germ and having symptoms of the illness. Current estimates suggest that symptoms of COVID-19 usually appear around five days on average, but the incubation period may be as short as two days to as long as 14 days.

## 4. What are the symptoms of the new coronavirus?

Fever, dry cough, and trouble breathing are the common symptoms of COVID-19. There have been some reports of gastrointestinal symptoms (nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea) before respiratory symptoms occur, but this is largely a respiratory virus.

Those who have the virus may have no obvious symptoms (be asymptomatic) or symptoms ranging from mild to severe. In some cases, the virus can cause pneumonia and potentially be life-threatening.

Most people who get sick will recover from COVID-19. Recovery time varies and, for people who are not severely ill, may be similar to the aftermath of a flulike illness. People with mild symptoms may recover within a few days. People who have pneumonia may take longer to recover (days to weeks). In cases of severe, life-threatening illness, it may take months for a person to recover, or the person may die.

## 5. Can people who are asymptomatic spread coronavirus?

A person who is asymptomatic may be shedding the virus and could make others ill. How often asymptomatic transmission is occurring is unclear.

## 6. Can the coronavirus live on soft surfaces like fabric or carpet? What about hard surfaces?

How long the new coronavirus can live on a soft surface — and more importantly, how easy or hard it is to spread this way — isn't clear yet. So far, available evidence suggests it can be transmitted less easily from soft surfaces than frequently-touched hard surfaces, such as a doorknob or elevator button.

According to the WHO, coronaviruses may survive on surfaces for just a [few hours or several days](#), although many factors will influence this, including surface material and weather.

That's why [personal preventive steps](#) like frequently washing hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, and wiping down often-touched surfaces with disinfectants or a household cleaning spray, are a good idea.

### **7. Can I catch the coronavirus by eating food prepared by others?**

We are still learning about transmission of COVID-19. It's not clear if this is possible, but if so it would be more likely to be the exception than the rule. That said, COVID-19 and other coronaviruses have been detected in the stool of certain patients, so we currently cannot rule out the possibility of occasional transmission from infected food handlers. The virus would likely be killed by cooking the food.

### **8. Is Corona Virus testing covered by my medical insurance?**

If you are a USNH Cigna customer, **CIGNA will waive all co-pays and cost-shares for Coronavirus (COVID-19) testing** as recommended by your health care provider.

Dr. Steve Miller, Cigna's Chief Clinical Officer, also offers advice and resources for coping with stress, recommendations on when to refill your prescriptions, and more.

[View Coronavirus Resources](#)

## **Reporting and Treatment for Corona Virus**

### **1. Is there a vaccine available for coronavirus?**

No vaccine is available, although scientists are working on vaccines. In 2003, scientists tried to develop a vaccine to prevent [SARS](#) but the epidemic ended before the vaccine could enter clinical trials.

### **2. What should people do if they think they have coronavirus or their child does? Go to an urgent care clinic? Go to the ER?**

If you have a health care provider or pediatrician, call them first for advice. In most parts of the US, it's far more likely to be the flu or another viral illness.

If you do not have a doctor and you are concerned that you or your child may have coronavirus, contact your [local board of health](#). They can direct you to the best place for evaluation and treatment in your area.

Only people with symptoms of severe respiratory illness should seek medical care in the ER. Severe symptoms are rapid heart rate, low blood pressure, high or very low temperatures, confusion, trouble breathing, severe dehydration. Call ahead to tell the ER that you are coming so they can be prepared for your arrival.

### **3. Who do I report a Corona diagnosis to at work?**

You are encouraged to report a COVID-19 diagnosis to your supervisor/HR. This is not only for your welfare but for the protection of your coworkers and community.

#### **4. What does it mean to self-quarantine? What do I have to do?**

Self-quarantine, or voluntary self-confinement, means USNH requests you to separate yourself, restrict your movement, and minimize your interactions with other people. The purpose is to limit the spread of COVID-19 because you have been identified as a person who had potential exposure during travel or work. Here are some concrete steps to help you make this happen:

- Stay home (or in your provided accommodation or hotel room) except to get medical care. You will not be allowed to return back to classes, work, or rotations.
- No visitors — only residents should be in the home.
- Separate yourself from other people. Stay in a separate bedroom and use a separate bathroom. If this is not possible or was not maintained, other residents must also self-quarantine for 14 days.
- Call ahead before visiting a health care provider.
- Cover your cough and sneezes. Wear a standard face mask if you are sick. This minimizes your chance of infecting others. *(Note: An N-95 respirator is not an effective face mask for those who are sick.)*
- Clean your hands often. Wash with soap and water for a minimum of 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60 percent alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Avoid sharing personal household items.
- Clean “common” or “high-touch” surfaces every day.
- Monitor your symptoms. Measure your temperature and be aware of a worsening cough, difficulty breathing, or shortness of breath. If any of these happen, contact a health care provider for an urgent care appointment or visit the closest emergency room. Please call ahead first.

## **CIGNA Insurance**

### **1. Is Corona Virus testing covered by my medical insurance?**

If you are a USNH Cigna customer, **CIGNA will waive all co-pays and cost-shares for Coronavirus (COVID-19) testing** as recommended by your health care provider.

If you are covered by our health plan, we also recommend using telehealth services through AmWell or MDLive, to help prevent potential infection with office visits.

Dr. Steve Miller, Cigna’s Chief Clinical Officer, also offers advice and resources for coping with stress, recommendations on when to refill your prescriptions, and more.

[View Coronavirus Resources](#)

## **University System/Campus-Related Corona Issues**

**1. What resources are available if I am stressed about the Corona virus?**

Employees are encouraged to contact the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) at 1.800.424.1749 or [www.eaphelplink.com](http://www.eaphelplink.com), Code: USNH. USNH will support increased flexibility in teleworking, where applicable, to ease employee concerns regarding reporting to work in an unstable environment. Partial teleworking is also allowed, with the employee supplementing their full work schedule with Personal or Earned Time accrual.

**2. What should I do if I don't feel well or am concerned that someone isn't well?**

If you feel ill at work, please notify your supervisor and take steps to ensure your safety and well-being. If you plan to seek out medical care with your PCP or Health & Wellness, please telephone them ahead of time to provide advance notice of your arrival. Telehealth through WebMD is encouraged to help prevent spread of infection.

If you are unable to work because you have symptoms associated with a cold or flu, stay home and use accrued sick leave (if available) to replace salary. If you need to stay home to care for a family member with cold or flu symptoms, use accrued Family Care (ability to use up to 25 sick time days) or Family Leave (ability to use up to 10 sick leave days as specified in CBAs) to replace salary, if available. If you have any additional concerns or questions, please consult with Human Resources.

**3. Would closure of the campuses interrupt payroll?**

No, USNH essential functions would continue.

**4. Can sick leave policies be more flexible (borrow from future accrual) during this pandemic?**

No, Human Resources will review these on a case-by-case basis.

**5. If a coworker makes me sick, is that covered under Workers' Compensation?**

No.

**6. If I am sick with the corona virus, will Short Term Disability and Family Medical Leave Act apply?**

Yes, standard rules regarding STD and FMLA will apply.

**7. If I have to self-quarantine, but am not sick, does STD and FMLA apply?**

STD would not apply. FMLA leave may apply if you are also caring for an ailing household member.

**8. What if an employee's child's daycare or school closes and they have to stay home to care for them?**

Where possible, remote working/teleworking can be arranged. Human Resources will address these on a case-by-case matter, in conjunction with the employee's supervisor.

If you need to stay home to care for a family member with cold or flu symptoms, use accrued Family Care (ability to use up to 25 sick time days) or Family Leave (ability to use up to 10 sick leave days as specified in CBAs) to replace salary, if available. If you have any additional concerns or questions, please consult with Human Resources.

**9. Are we telling faculty and staff that they cannot travel at all?**

No, it is up to them if they would like to keep their travel plans, but we are requiring a 14 day self-quarantine of they travel to any of the areas identified by the CDC as Level 3 and US “hot spot” areas. As this is a rapidly changing situation, even areas that are considered low risk now, might be added to the high risk list during their time away.

**10. What are the guidelines for an employee whose household family member/s have traveled to high risk areas and/or may be infected?**

Self-quarantine for fourteen days.

**11. If employees are at work and show active symptoms of being unwell, can a supervisor send them home/ask them to seek medical consultation?**

Yes, a supervisor has the right within policy to send a sick employee home.

**12. What if I can't work remotely and changing my schedule will not work because of any of the following? I am sick; I have to self-quarantine; I have a family member who must self-quarantine; my child's school is closed, and I have no childcare options.**

Talk with your supervisor to explore how the work will be accomplished. If it is determined that no options will work in your situation, non-exempt (hourly paid) staff should enter COVID on their web time entry and paid leave will not be charged. Exempt staff will continue to be paid but again, must explore with the supervisor how work will be accomplished. This approval/pay practice process will be in effect through April 3, 2020.

**13. I am afraid of getting infected and do not want to come to work. I feel safer staying at home. What are my options?**

If you are nervous about coming to work, follow the recent guidance that was issued about flexible work arrangements and talk to your supervisor and Human Resources. Partial teleworking is also allowed, with the employee supplementing their full work schedule with Personal or Earned Time accrual.

## **Travel**

### **TRAVEL FAQs**

Travel can increase the risks of exposure to you and the community. Government restrictions and public health measures are changing fast. If you travel, those changes may make it hard for you to return and resume activities. The travel restrictions may change as the public health situation evolves. We will continue to update

guidance as needed. While these restrictions are more stringent than current CDC guidelines, they are consistent with those imposed by many college and universities, corporations and state and local governments.

### **1. Are there restrictions in place for international travel?**

For the next 30 days international business travel is prohibited, and all personal international travel is strongly discouraged. We want to avoid employees being stuck overseas if additional travel and re-entry restrictions are put in place. This will be reassessed in 30 days. Employees should avoid or postpone travel to geographic areas where COVID-19 community transmission is present based on the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) risk assessment/travel advisory guidelines](#).

If you recently traveled to any region with a [“Level 3” Travel Health Notice from the CDC](#), or have been in close contact with someone who has traveled to a “Level 3” country, **you must self-quarantine off-site for 14 days beginning the day you return to the United States**. Please do not return to your campus office.

### **2. Are there restrictions in place for domestic travel?**

All non-essential domestic business travel is prohibited for the next 30 days. This will be reassessed within 30 days. As applicable, consult with your manager to determine whether your domestic travel is essential. Employees are strongly encouraged to use remote methods, such as teleconferencing, where possible.

For personal travel within the U.S., you are strongly urged to use extreme caution and judgment. Check the state and territorial health department websites for the latest information.

<https://www.cdc.gov/publichealthgateway/healthdirectories/healthdepartments.html>

### **3. What options are available for employees who have incurred expenses for upcoming travel?**

Please work with your manager to cancel your travel commitments and request refunds or credits to use on future USNH travel. If you are unable to secure refunded expenses or travel credit for future use, there will be no financial impact to you; we will cover cancellation costs.