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What is COVID-19?

Novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is a new virus strain that originated in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China that has spread among humans since December 2019.

COVID-19 is now the name of what is commonly being referred to as “coronavirus.” There have been previous coronaviruses and four of them are responsible for the common cold, which is a mild respiratory illness. Some coronaviruses have caused more severe illness, such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS).

When the virus first appeared, we did not know if COVID-19 would cause mild respiratory symptoms or more severe symptoms, which is why many countries developed significant efforts to contain the virus. Now that cases have been identified in the US in people who have not travelled, we know that it may spread in our community. Fortunately, we know more about this virus now than we did before and national, state and local organizations are coordinating efforts to help with control. We need your help too – by spreading appropriate and factual information, you can help to control the spread of the virus. Please share [these resources](#) with friends and family and have them practice the below precautions.

What should I do if I think I have COVID-19?

For the protection of our staff and other patients, we ask that anyone concerned about COVID-19 infection please call before coming in so that a nurse can speak with you. There is currently no specific treatment for COVID-19, but your nurse can provide you with information and home care instructions that can help alleviate your symptoms. If you have symptoms or are concerned about being sick, please help us to protect our staff and patients by staying at home and allowing us to address your concerns over the phone.

How can I protect myself?

The best thing you can do to protect yourself against coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is to avoid exposure. Here are some strategies from the CDC on how to do that:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. If possible, try to stay 6 feet away.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Follow CDC’s recommendations for using a facemask.
 - CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.

- Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is also crucial for health workers and people who are taking care of someone in close settings (at home or in a health care facility).
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
 - If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

If you will be visiting the clinic for a scheduled appointment, please do not bring with you anyone who is sick with cold and flu symptoms, including family members.

There is currently no vaccine available to prevent COVID-19 infection. Most cases of COVID-19 infection will be mild and will not require medical attention. For more the most up to date information about COVID-19, see the [CDC website](#).

Can I get a test for COVID-19?

Currently only the US Centers for Disease Control and certain county Departments of Public Health have access to COVID-19 testing for individuals with specific symptoms. People without symptoms are NOT being testing for this virus. Ravenswood Family Health Center does NOT currently have access to testing kits and is unable to test patients concerned about symptoms or exposure.

Will I die if I get COVID-19?

The majority of patients who get sick with COVID-19 will have very mild illness and will not need to see a medical provider or go to the hospital. At the time of this update, approximately 3,000 people in the world have died from COVID-19. By comparison, this year, at least 18,000 people in the US alone have died from the flu. Your risk from COVID-19 is much lower than that of the yearly flu virus. The best thing you can do to keep yourself and your family safe from illness in general is to get your flu shot.

My child's school was affected by COVID-19. What should I do?

In addition to the above prevention steps, see the [CDC's information guide regarding COVID-19 in children](#).

Can I get COVID-19 from packages delivered from China or other countries?

No. Coronaviruses do not survive long on objects such as letters and packages. For more on common myths related to COVID-19, check out the WHO website.