



Department of Health

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Executive Deputy Commissioner

March 6, 2020

Dear Family and Friends,

As you have likely recently heard, there is a novel coronavirus (COVID-19) that has raised significant global concern over the past several weeks. Health officials are working diligently to ensure that plans are in place to minimize the spread of the virus and to mitigate the impact should the virus make an appearance in the local area.

Here at the New York State Veterans' Home in Oxford we are monitoring the evolving situation daily and have and will continue to provide ongoing training and education to key medical and nursing staff. Although there are no known cases of COVID-19 at the Veterans' Home, we have an active surveillance program and we are well prepared to care for your loved one should the virus make an appearance.

What can you do?

- Please help us by not visiting the Home if you are ill!
- If you do become ill with or are exposed to COVID-19 and you have visited the Home, please let us know so we can assess the risk of transmission within the facility.
- Frequently wash your hands and do not eat or touch your face with unwashed hands.
- Check reliable sources for updated information as this situation evolves, [i.e. Your State and Local Health Department, and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC)]

www.health.ny.gov/coronavirus

www.CDC.gov/COVID19

We have also enclosed an information sheet from the CDC which provides key information about COVID-19 that we would like to share with you.

In summary, we here at the Veterans' Home want to assure you that we take the health of your loved one very seriously, and as such, we are working diligently to prevent the spread of infections within the facility. Special attention has and will continue to be paid to the education of our staff and health care providers of this rapidly evolving situation. As always, we are available to address any questions or concerns that you may have.

Sincerely,

Marjorie Ketzak, Medical Director
NYS Veterans' Home
Oxford, NY 13830

What you need to know about coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)

What is coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel coronavirus that was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China.

Can people in the U.S. get COVID-19?

Yes. COVID-19 is spreading from person to person in parts of the United States. Risk of infection with COVID-19 is higher for people who are close contacts of someone known to have COVID-19, for example healthcare workers, or household members. Other people at higher risk for infection are those who live in or have recently been in an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19. Learn more about places with ongoing spread at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html#geographic>.

Have there been cases of COVID-19 in the U.S.?

Yes. The first case of COVID-19 in the United States was reported on January 21, 2020. The current count of cases of COVID-19 in the United States is available on CDC's webpage at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-in-us.html>.

How does COVID-19 spread?

The virus that causes COVID-19 probably emerged from an animal source, but is now spreading from person to person. The virus is thought to spread mainly between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It also may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. Learn what is known about the spread of newly emerged coronaviruses at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html>.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Patients with COVID-19 have had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of

- fever
- cough
- shortness of breath

What are severe complications from this virus?

Some patients have pneumonia in both lungs, multi-organ failure and in some cases death.

How can I help protect myself?

People can help protect themselves from respiratory illness with everyday preventive actions.

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.

If you are sick, to keep from spreading respiratory illness to others, you should

- 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.

What should I do if I recently traveled from an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19?

If you have traveled from an affected area, there may be restrictions on your movements for up to 2 weeks. If you develop symptoms during that period (fever, cough, trouble breathing), seek medical advice. Call the office of your health care provider before you go, and tell them about your travel and your symptoms. They will give you instructions on how to get care without exposing other people to your illness. While sick, avoid contact with people, don't go out and delay any travel to reduce the possibility of spreading illness to others.

Is there a vaccine?

There is currently no vaccine to protect against COVID-19. The best way to prevent infection is to take everyday preventive actions, like avoiding close contact with people who are sick and washing your hands often.

Is there a treatment?

There is no specific antiviral treatment for COVID-19. People with COVID-19 can seek medical care to help relieve symptoms.

