

February 2, 2020

Coronavirus frequently asked questions

Q: Does the student who tested positive for coronavirus live on campus?

A: No, the student does not live on campus and remains isolated at an off campus location at this time. The student did not participate in any classes or campus activities last week.

Q: Was the student who tested positive for coronavirus in any of my classes last week?

A: No, the student did not attend classes last week.

Q: Should I be scared to come to work/school?

A: No. State and city public health authorities have informed us that the risk to members of our community is low. For these reasons, we expect “business as usual” on campus.

Q: How is the virus transmitted from one person to another?

A: CDC guidelines indicate that the virus is transmitted from close contact with an infected person, meaning within proximity of 6 feet. Coronaviruses are respiratory viruses and are generally spread through respiratory secretions (droplets from coughs and sneezes) of an infected person to another person. Symptoms of novel coronavirus include fever, cough and shortness of breath, and, in severe cases, pneumonia (fluid in the lungs). Information about how this novel coronavirus spreads is still limited. According to the CDC:

“Much is unknown about how 2019-nCoV, a new coronavirus, spreads. Current knowledge is largely based on what is known about similar coronaviruses. Typically, with most respiratory viruses, people are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest). It’s important to note that how easily a virus spreads person-to-person can vary. Some viruses are highly contagious (like measles), while other viruses are less so. There is much more to learn about the transmissibility, severity, and other features associated with 2019-nCoV and investigations are ongoing. This information will further inform the [risk assessment](#). Read the [latest 2019 Novel Coronavirus, Wuhan, China situation summary](#).”

Q: Has any member of our community had close contact with the student who has the coronavirus infection?

A: An active investigation is being conducted by the Boston Public Health Commission and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to identify all individuals - whether UMB community members or otherwise - who had contact with the student.

Q: I am worried that I had close contact with a person who might have the coronavirus. What should I do?

A: If you are worried and are experiencing symptoms of respiratory illness, such as cough or shortness of breath, please stay home and call UHS at 617-287-5660 or your local health care provider. Health

authorities suggest that people continue with their daily activities while observing common-sense steps outlined by public health experts (listed below).

Q: I am not feeling well. What should I do?

A: If you have a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness, such as cough or shortness of breath, and are worried that you have coronavirus, please call UHS at 617-287-5660 or your local health care provider.

Q: Should I wear a surgical mask while on campus? Will you be providing surgical masks?

A: CDC has advised that face masks are not necessary or recommended for the general public. Different cultures have different customs with regard to the use of protective masks. Masks are worn for a variety of health reasons and do not necessarily indicate illness. Masks can provide protection by preventing the wearer from touching their mouth and nose, which is a common way viruses and germs enter the body. They may also help trap infected droplets when a contagious person coughs or sneezes.

Q: What is 2019 Novel Coronavirus?

A: 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) is a virus that causes respiratory illness. Symptoms can include fever, cough, difficulty breathing, shortness of breath and pneumonia.

Q: What if I recently traveled to China?

A: If you are a UMass student, faculty or staff member and have travelled in or through China, or if you have had direct contact with someone ill with 2019-nCoV in the past 14 days, please **call UHS at 617-287-5660 for guidance.**

If you were in China or had direct contact with someone ill with 2019-nCoV and are experiencing symptoms of respiratory illness such as fever, cough or difficulty breathing within 14 days after you left China:

- **Call UHS at 617-287-5660 at once for advice.**
- Stay where you are until one of our nurses calls you back. Do not come to the Health Center, attend class, or visit the dining hall, to limit exposure to others.
- Practice careful and frequent handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds to avoid spreading the virus to others. Use an alcohol-based sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- If you live with others, wear a mask if you are coughing, sneezing, and/or congested with a runny or stuffy nose.
- Avoid touching your nose, mouth, and eyes.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.

Q: Should I be tested for 2019-nCoV?

A: Testing for 2019 Novel Coronavirus is only available through the Massachusetts State Public Health Laboratory and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Any health care provider who suspects a person is infected with 2019 Novel Coronavirus should call the Massachusetts Department

of Public Health to discuss testing, at (617) 983-6800. If you develop a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness, such as cough or shortness of breath, within 14 days after travel from China, please **call UHS at 617-287-5660**. If you have had close contact with someone showing these symptoms who has recently traveled from this area, please **call UHS at 617-287-5660**. Your healthcare provider will work with the Mass. Department of Public Health, Boston Public Health Commission and the CDC to determine if you need to be tested for 2019-nCoV.

Q: Am I at risk for 2019-nCoV infection in the United States?

A: The CDC states the risk of novel coronavirus virus remains low. The risk from seasonal influenza is much greater and it is still not too late to get your flu shot. This is a rapidly evolving situation. The latest situation summary updates are available on CDC's web page [2019 Novel Coronavirus, Wuhan, China](#).

Some perspective helps: As of today, the CDC has confirmed 8 cases of coronavirus in the U.S. at this time and no deaths. There are about 25,000,000 cases of the flu this season and well over 15,000 deaths.

Q: How can I help protect myself from any respiratory virus?

A: The simple actions below will help to prevent the spread of all respiratory viruses and create a healthier campus community.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- 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.
- Getting the flu vaccine: Make an online appointment through your health portal My Health Beacon or call UHS at 617-287-5660.

Q: Should I travel to China or other countries where 2019-nCoV cases have occurred for work or pleasure?

A: The U.S. State Department has [advised](#) against travel to China at this time.

Q: Is there a vaccine?

A: Currently, there is no vaccine available to protect against 2019-nCoV.

Q: What are the treatments?

A: There is no specific antiviral medication recommended for 2019-nCoV infection. People infected with 2019-nCoV will receive supportive care to help relieve symptoms. Learn about [2019-nCoV Treatment](#).

Q: What is a novel coronavirus?

A: A novel coronavirus (nCoV) is a new coronavirus that has not been previously identified. Coronaviruses are named for the crown-like spikes on their surface. Human coronaviruses are common throughout the world. Seven different coronaviruses, that scientists know of, can infect people and make them sick. Human coronaviruses commonly cause mild to moderate illness in people worldwide or be more serious such as MERS-CoV and SARS-CoV, which have been known to frequently cause severe illness.

Q: Where did this virus come from?

A: Public health officials are working to identify the source of the 2019-nCoV. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses, some causing illness in people and others that circulate among animals. Early on, many of the patients in the outbreak in Wuhan, China reportedly had some link to a large seafood and animal market, suggesting the virus likely emerged from an animal source.

Q: How does the virus spread?

A: Public health experts suggest this virus probably emerged from an animal source but now seems to be spreading from person-to-person, probably through droplets like other respiratory viruses are spread. Some viruses are highly contagious (like measles), while other viruses are less so.

Q: Why did the World Health Organization call this a global health emergency?

A: Information about the WHO's response can be found [here](#).

Learn More:

www.mass.gov/2019coronavirus

[2019-nCoV FAQ](#) - CDC

[2019 Novel Coronavirus, Wuhan, China](#) - CDC

[2019-nCoV Travel Health Notices](#) - CDC

[Coronavirus FAQ](#) - NPR