Updated Interim Guidance on Outbreak of 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Please note the changes in this update, specifically regarding travelers and EMS.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) continues to closely monitor an outbreak of a 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China that began in December 2019. This is a new virus, and information continues to evolve daily. Currently, there are over 60,360 confirmed cases and 1370 deaths. The number of cases is changing rapidly. There have now been 175 confirmed cases outside of China in 27 countries, including 15 cases in USA (WA, CA, AZ, IL, MA, WI). Thirteen of the U.S. cases were in travelers who had been in Wuhan, China in the previous 14 days, and two are spouses of confirmed cases that had not traveled to China but had close, personal contact. CDC states that current risk to those in USA is low, as this virus is not currently spreading in the community. However, it is expected that more cases will occur in the U.S., including the likelihood of some level of transmission within U.S. communities. To date there have been no confirmed cases in Arkansas, and there are currently no Patients Under Investigation (PUI) in Arkansas.

The itineraries of travelers from China are being re-routed through one of the 11 airports with CDC Quarantine Stations so that all travelers from China are screened. The CDC has been screening all travelers who have traveled from or through China. The flow of travelers specifically from Wuhan has slowed greatly since Chinese authorities instituted travel restrictions out of Wuhan and Hubei Province. CDC and the State Department recommend against all non-essential travel to China.

Recommendations for Health Care Providers

We are still learning about the range of clinical illness associated with COVID-19. In general, it causes a febrile, lower respiratory illness. It may be mild. However, persons over age 50 or with pre-existing conditions are noted to have more severe illness. No vaccine or specific treatment for COVID-19 infection is available. Care is supportive. For details on clinical care: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/clinical-guidance-management-patients.html.

Health care providers should obtain a detailed travel history for patients being evaluated with fever and acute respiratory illness. Patients should be asked about any travel from China in the last 14 days. Patients in the United States who meet the following criteria should be evaluated as a Person Under Investigation (PUI) in association with the outbreak of COVID-19:

1) Fever OR signs/symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough, shortness of breath)
   –AND any person, including health care workers, who has had close contact with a laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 patient within 14 days of symptom onset.
2) Fever AND signs/symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) – AND a history of travel from Hubei Province, China within 14 days of symptom onset.

3) Fever AND signs/symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) requiring hospitalization, – AND a history of travel from mainland China within 14 days of symptom onset.

The above criteria are also available at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/clinical-criteria.html. These criteria are intended to serve as guidance for evaluation. Patients should be evaluated and discussed with the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) on a case-by-case basis. We also want to emphasize that clinicians should also, at the same time, proceed with normally indicated testing for pneumonia or similar respiratory infections (influenza, multiplex respiratory panel, CXR, etc.) We have included a 1-page job aid for clinicians to help with first steps that can also be found at https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/images/uploads/pdf/Job_Aid_for_Clinicians1.31.20.pdf

Monitoring of Travelers Returning from China
Anyone returning to the U.S. from Hubei province will be subject to 14 days of mandatory quarantine near one of the aforementioned 11 airports of entry without being allowed to continue to their final destination (for instance, Arkansas). The Arkansas Department of Health is receiving notifications from the CDC regarding travelers who have returned from mainland China (outside Hubei Province) whose journey will end in Arkansas. We are communicating with these people daily for 14 days from the date they left China. Our contact includes daily symptom checks and planning for what to do in the event the person has an emergency or becomes ill. Generally, CDC and federal advice is for these people to self-isolate at home, avoid going out in public or to congregate settings, and limit having close contact with others in their household. Information for travelers returning from China: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/from-china.html.

If you become aware of a traveler who has returned from China in the last 14 days and is not being monitored by ADH, please urge them to contact us at the phone numbers at the bottom of this advisory. Alternatively, feel free to contact us yourself. We also recommend that employers and schools accommodate the home self-isolation of any employees or students who have recently returned from China in the interest of protecting the public health.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS)
ADH is communicating with emergency medical staff, 911 operators, and others to inform them of ways to keep themselves safe with proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE, see below) in the event they must attend someone under monitoring for possible exposure to COVID-19. We are informing such persons to make sure they inform 911 operators and EMS workers ahead of time so EMS workers can wear the proper PPE. See full CDC recommendations for EMS here: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-for-ems.html.

Interim Health Care Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Patients Under Investigation for COVID-19
Although the transmission dynamics are not fully known, CDC currently recommends a cautious approach to patients under investigation for COVID-19. https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/infection-control.html
• **Such patients should be asked to wear a surgical mask** as soon as they are identified and be evaluated in a private room with the door closed, ideally an airborne infection isolation room if available.

• **Health care personnel entering the room should use the following precautions:**
  - standard precautions (gloves)
  - contact precautions (gown)
  - airborne precautions (mask, N95 preferable)
  - use eye protection (e.g., goggles or a face shield)

• Immediately notify your health care facility’s infection control personnel and ADH.

**Recommendations for Reporting, Testing, and Specimen Collection**

Health care providers should **immediately** notify both infection control personnel at their health care facility and ADH if they encounter a possible Patient Under Investigation for COVID-19. ADH will help coordinate submission of samples.

CDC recommends collecting and testing multiple clinical specimens from different sites, **including all three specimen types**

- **Lower respiratory (sputum or BAL)**
- **Upper respiratory (nasopharyngeal swab AND oropharyngeal swab)**
- **Serum**

Specimens should be collected as soon as possible once a PUI is identified regardless of time of symptom onset. Additional guidance for collection, handling, and testing of clinical specimens is available at [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/lab/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/lab/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html). Testing will soon be available at ADH’s Public Health Laboratory, but currently can be conducted only at CDC until the testing validation in the ADH lab has been completed. Specimens must be sent to ADH’s Public Health Laboratory for submission to CDC. Testing for other respiratory pathogens should not delay specimen shipping. If a PUI tests positive for another respiratory pathogen, after clinical evaluation and consultation with ADH, they may no longer be considered a PUI. This may evolve as more information becomes available on possible COVID-19 infections.


We at ADH are here to help consult on the evaluation of such cases and keep you updated as this outbreak evolves. Please call the Outbreak Response Section at

- 501-537-8969 Monday-Friday 8:00am-4:30pm, or
- 1-800-554-5738 after hours or on weekends for any assistance.

For general questions regarding COVID-19, please contact the Call Center at 1-800-803-7847.

Sincerely,
The Health Alert Network (HAN) gives notification regarding outbreaks or other public health events. To learn more about HAN and sign up for alerts go to [https://hanregistration.adh.arkansas.gov](https://hanregistration.adh.arkansas.gov)