
PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY

STATUS UPDATE ON COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS

MARCH 5, 2020

This is a revised Status Update replacing the prior Advisory dated February 28.

Situational Update

The Riverside County Department of Public Health continues to track the epidemic of COVID-19 disease in multiple countries. As of March 4, 95,120 cases were recorded in 80 countries with 3,254 worldwide deaths. 80,270 of these cases are in mainland China and 67,732 cases are in Hubei province, with the capital city of Wuhan believed to be the epicenter. Secondary outbreaks are now reported in South Korea (5,621), Italy (3,089) and Iran (2,922), along with 706 travelers infected on the *Diamond Princess* cruise liner currently in lockdown off the Japanese coast.

In the United States, 80 cases have been recorded, 46 of these being individuals repatriated from the *Diamond Princess* cruise liner. 24 have been attributed to travel and sixteen cases have been attributed to person-to-person transmission (i.e., close contacts), with an additional 40 cases under investigation.

In California, 58 cases have been recorded, with 12 cases in Southern California. Riverside County housed a repatriation flight at March Air Reserve Base for the full 14-day quarantine period and released all 195 individuals on that flight on February 11. The March Air Reserve Base quarantine station closed on February 22 with no reports of COVID-19 in any travelers quarantined there. Riverside County has recorded one case in a resident, but this individual was repatriated from the *Diamond Princess* and has had no travel to the county since leaving the cruise liner. **No exposures to this individual are known in Riverside County, and no cases of community COVID-19 have been detected in the County.**

Although extraordinary reports of incubation periods beyond 14 days have been anecdotally reported by Chinese health authorities, these reports do not account for the elevated probability of multiple exposures in high prevalence regions. No reports of incubation periods beyond 14 days have come from lower-prevalence regions, and both the WHO and the CDC continue to use a **14-day incubation period as an upper bound.**

There are no current recommendations for therapy beyond supportive care, and while there are reports that vaccines are in the pipeline, the earliest estimate for their general availability would be at least one year. Remdesivir has been employed in some limited clinical trials but is not a general recommendation.

Although testing is now possible at some local health departments and the department is working with partner agencies and expanding our own laboratory offerings, currently Riverside County uses the California Department of Public Health Viral and Rickettsial Disease Laboratory (CDPH VRDL) for testing for COVID-19. **All testing requests must currently be made through RUHS-PH.**

Returning Travelers

Foreign nationals are currently **not allowed to return** to the United States if they have travelled to **China** within the last 14 days.

American citizens, lawful permanent residents and their families who have travelled to **China** within the last 14 days will be directed to one of 11 airports, including Los Angeles International Airport, for health screening and are subject to quarantine. Symptomatic individuals are evaluated at these airports and sent to health care facilities as acuity warrants. Asymptomatic individuals who had traveled to **Hubei province** will be **mandatorily quarantined** for up to 14 days in specified facilities. Travelers to **other Chinese regions** are referred to their local health departments for active monitoring and home quarantine for up to 14 days.

In addition, travelers from countries with **CDC Level 3 Health Notices** (currently **South Korea, Iran and Italy** as well as China) are required to self-quarantine at home for 14 days, and to notify the local health department of any fevers or symptoms. They are not to return to work or school until 14 days outside of the affected country has elapsed, and they are instructed to maintain social distance (6 feet or more) with other individuals as much as possible.

These travelers are handled by local and national public health authorities and **any returning traveler in these groups within the last 14 days** contacting your office directly should be told to remain at home and be directed to the Department of Public Health at 951 358 5107.

Determining Who Should Be Tested

The CDC no longer has specific requirements for Persons Under Investigation (PUIs). However, CDPH and local laboratories may require a risk assessment, and testing for COVID-19 is *not* recommended as routine or panel testing. When obtaining the history of a suspected case of COVID-19, **be prepared to present** to the Department of Public Health the following information to evaluate the case:

- Symptoms (fever, cough, other lower respiratory symptoms)
- Date of onset

- Travel dates (including **specific cities or regions visited** and **when**). For many countries the specific region is vital to determining exact risk.
- Individuals this person was exposed to who may have COVID-19, and information on why you suspect them to be meaningful exposures. The highest level of concern involves **household contacts**.
- Other testing. **Influenza should be ruled out:** flu and COVID-19 disease are difficult to distinguish clinically, and influenza B activity in the county remains elevated. The Department also strongly advises obtaining a **respiratory viral panel** and considering a **rapid strep** test if pharyngitis is noted. You may be required to complete other initial testing before specimens are accepted.

In general stopovers in countries less than 8 hours in duration are not considered meaningful exposures, nor are sick individuals on planes who are not sitting near or adjacent to the individual in question, especially if COVID-19 was never confirmed.

Testing generally requires oropharyngeal and nasopharyngeal swabs. Courier service to pick up specimens can be arranged for many locations. If you are unable or unwilling to collect specimens, please notify the Department to consider an alternative.

All testing requests must go through RUHS-PH. Please call 951 358 5107 during business hours, or after hours 951 782 2974 for on-call if urgent or emergent.

Provider Assessment

RUHS-PH realizes that there is substantial concern about COVID-19 from providers and patients, and that call volume to outpatient clinics and to the Department of Public Health has been high. Although there is no confirmed community spread of COVID-19 in Riverside County currently, providers may still recommend to patients with flu-like symptoms that they **call first and be assessed**. A **thorough travel history with exact cities and dates of travel** is strongly advised, as in the absence of known community spread an outpatient lacking appropriate travel or contact history is **unlikely to have the disease**. The Department of Public Health is closely monitoring **test availability** and will make further notifications as test capacity increases.

Providers who wish to direct a case of concern to higher levels of care should **coordinate with any intended destination facility** so that the patient can be quickly masked and moved to respiratory isolation, and does not remain in waiting areas for extended periods of time.

Emergency departments and urgent care departments may wish to **post signage** advising recent travelers to affected areas within the last two weeks who are currently ill to call ahead or contact triage staff as soon as they arrive.

Providers who are uncertain what to do with a suspect case or believe they **have a case** that meets the clinical definition may call 951 358 5107 during regular business hours, or the emergency on-call line at 951 782 2974 if an urgent or emergent case manifests after hours.

Resources

RUHS-PH COVID-19 page: <http://rivcoph.org/coronavirus/>

CDC COVID-19 page: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>

Current CDC travel advisories: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>

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