



Washington County Health Department

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For Immediate Release

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Re: Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is recommending the United States prepare for possible community spread of the new coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, which is rapidly spreading in China, and has spread to several other countries.

“We want you to know that there have been no confirmed cases of coronavirus in Maryland or neighboring states, but now is the time to prepare,” said Earl Stoner, Washington County Health Officer. “Since this virus is known to spread by respiratory droplets, much like seasonal influenza, frequent handwashing with soap and water or alcohol-based gel, coughing or sneezing into a tissue, and avoidance of touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands are proven strategies to protect yourself from this type of infection.”

Other important actions are staying home if sick, keeping ill persons away from the rest of the household, and avoiding public spaces if possible (also called social distancing). Frequent cleaning of high touch areas such as counters, door knobs, phones, keyboards, and bathroom surfaces will also reduce the spread of viruses. Use a cleaning agent that kills viruses and wear gloves if directed by the manufacturer of the product.

If you develop symptoms such as fever, cough, and difficulty breathing, seek prompt medical care and make sure to call your doctor ahead of your arrival. If symptoms become serious, call ahead before going to an urgent care clinic or an emergency room, but seek prompt care. You may be asked to put on a mask as soon as you arrive and you may be separated from others in the waiting room. Face masks are not being recommended for the general public, only for those who have symptoms and are being evaluated by a health care provider.

The global situation regarding this new coronavirus is changing daily. “It’s a very fluid situation,” said Stoner, “and we are in daily communication with our community partners, the Maryland Department of Health, and the CDC to prepare for the eventuality that this illness becomes established here as it has elsewhere.”

There is a great deal of guidance available for the general public, businesses, health care providers, schools, emergency services and others at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html> or the Washington County Health Department’s website at <https://washcohealth.org>.